PAINTING MYTHOLOGICAL CREATURES IN PAINTER

A GUIDE TO USING A BRIEF TO CREATE CREATURE CONCEPTS

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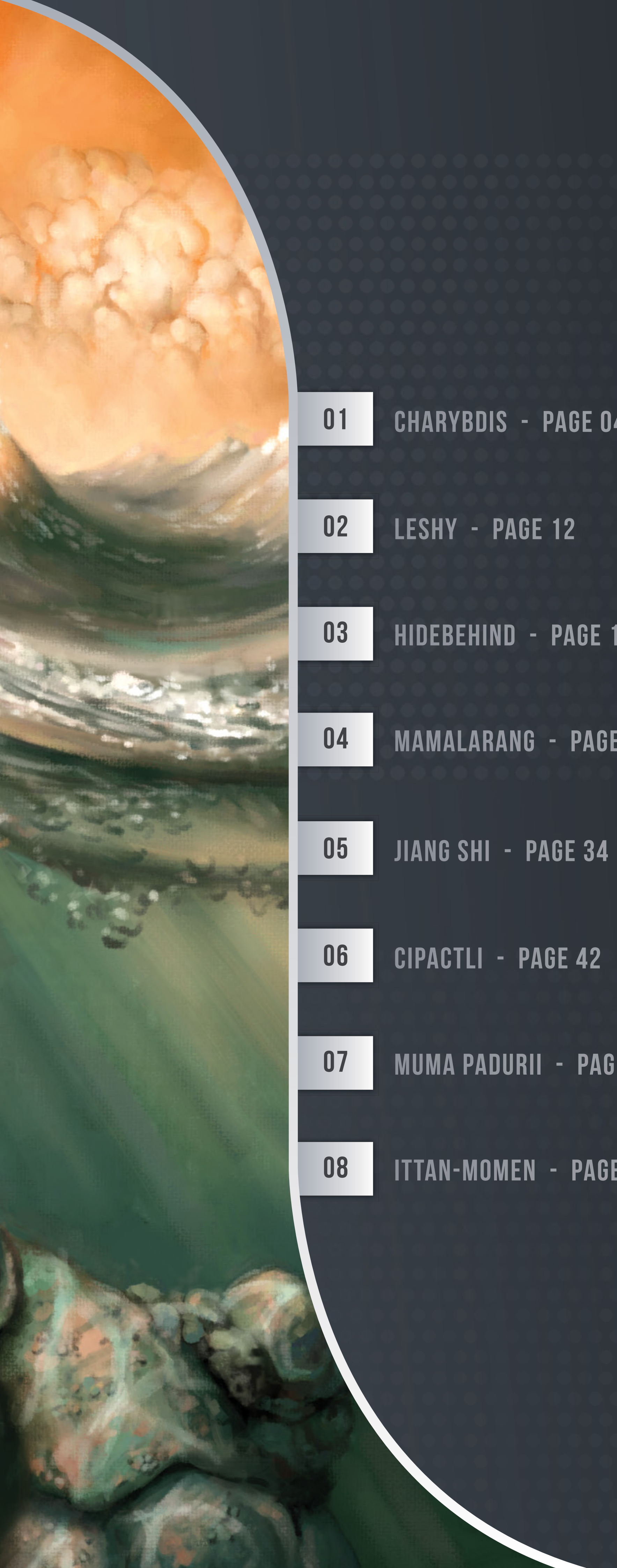

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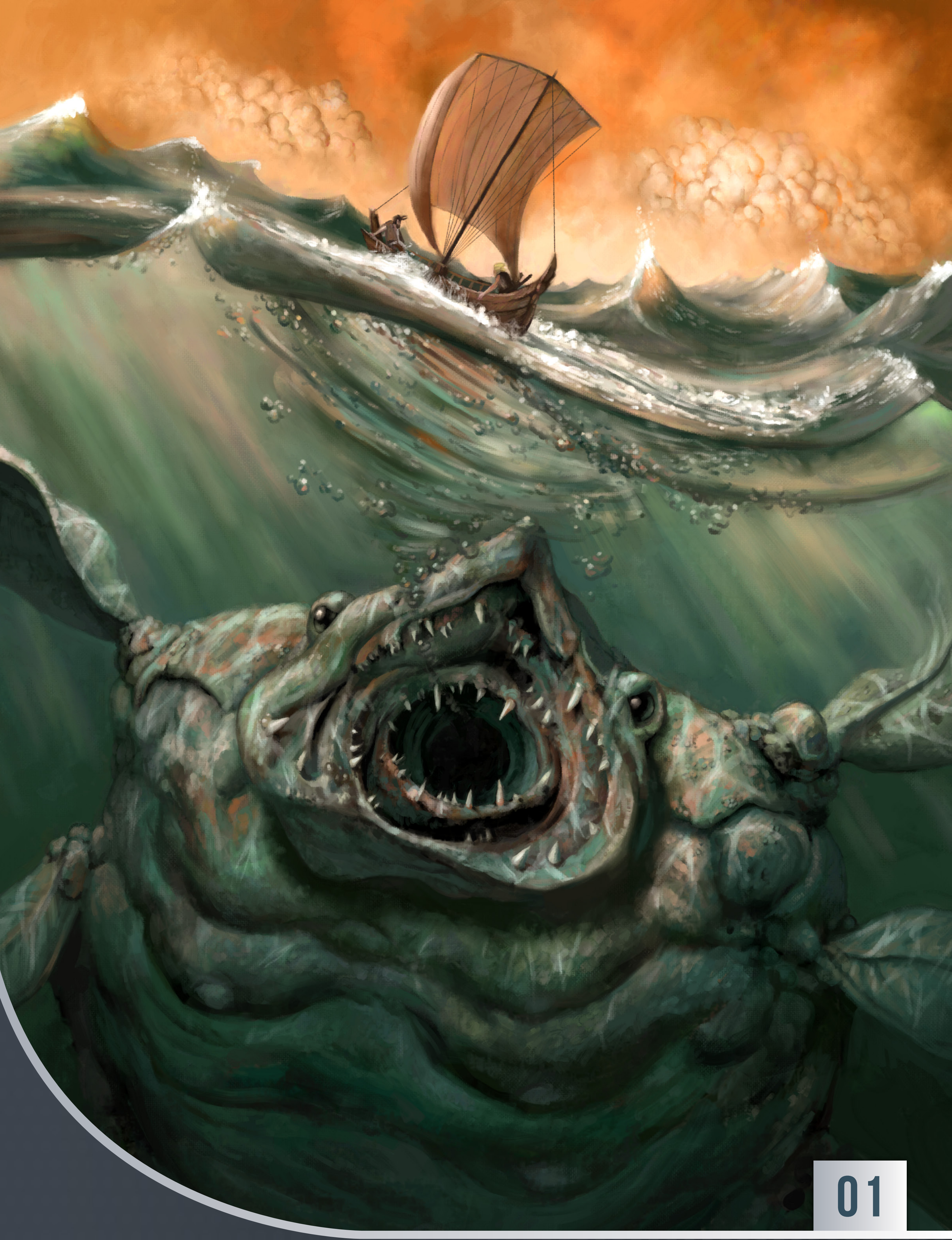
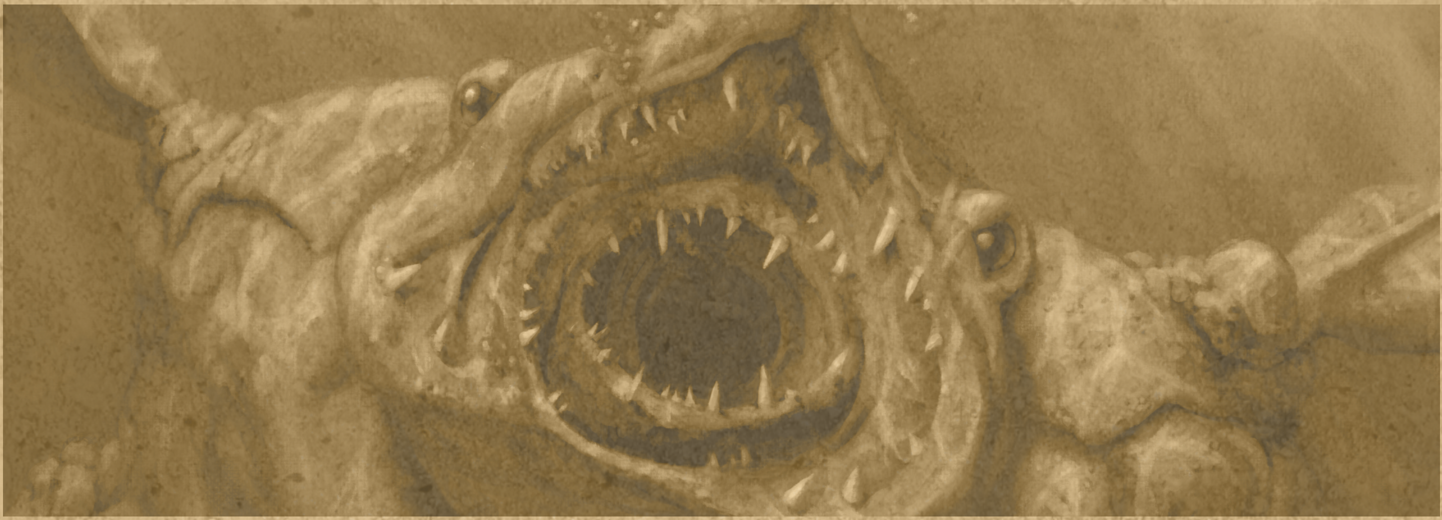


01

CHARYBDIS



Chapter 01 - Charybdis

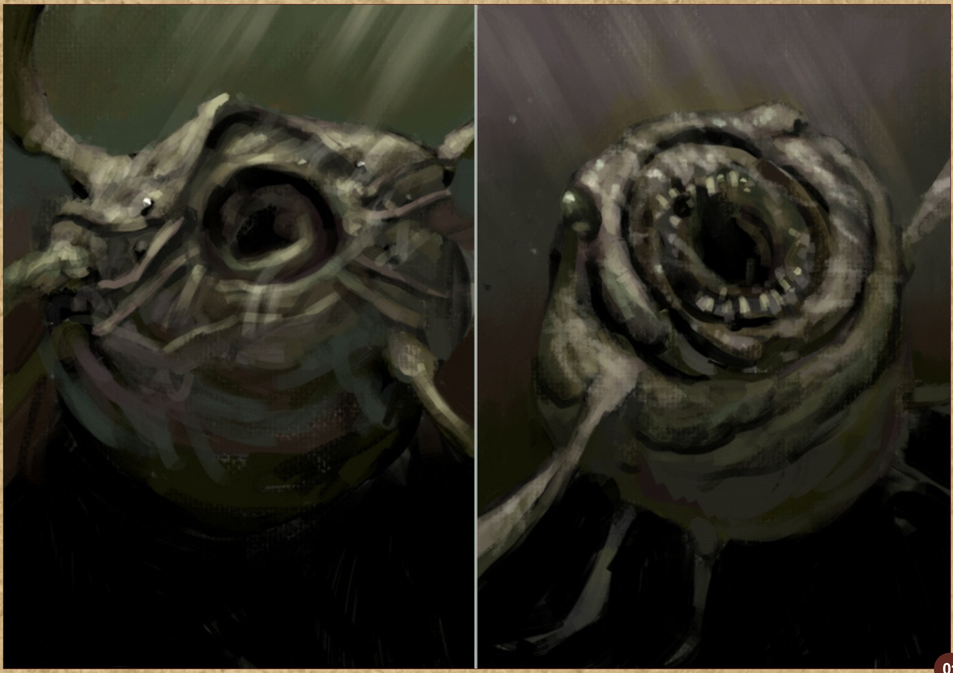
Software used: Painter

Introduction

According to Greek mythology the Charybdis is a huge, blubbery sea monster who long ago was transformed from a beautiful nymph who happened to be the daughter of Poseidon and Gaia. Now possessing a huge mouth and fins instead of limbs, she swallows vast quantities of sea water three times a day before disgorging it to create treacherous whirlpools. In this tutorial I'll be depicting Charybdis in her monster form, rising from the depths to ensnare unwary fishermen with her turbulent belching. I'll be using Painter 12 for the whole tutorial.

Concepts

The first stage is to create some concepts for the creature. I sketch out a few rough ideas, taking no more than ten minutes per piece. Then I have a look to see which one is worth taking forward. I don't bother with colors at this stage and instead concentrate on defining form through the use of values, that is, lights and darks. I quite like the idea of a fat turtle-looking beast so with that in mind, I go onto the next step (**Fig.01**).



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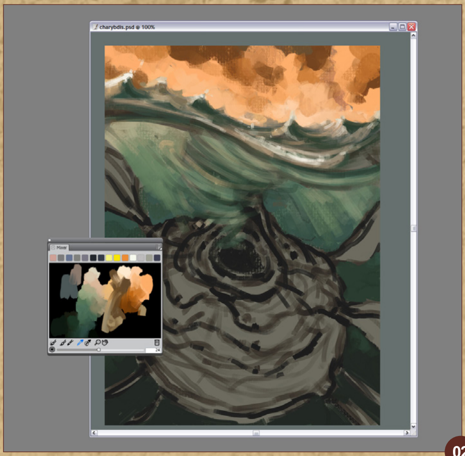

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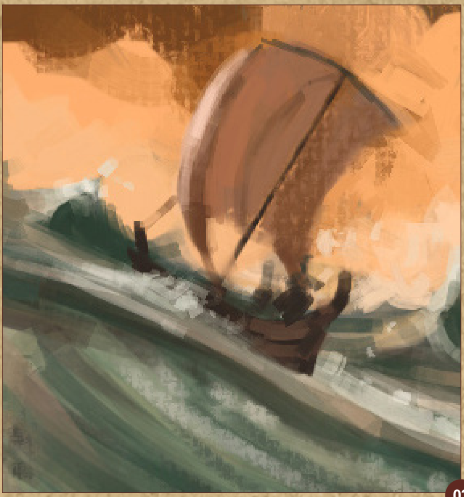
Beginning the Color Sketch

I create a small canvas 900 pixels high in the same aspect ratio as my final image will be. Then using the Mixer palette, I create a palette of the colors I intend to use; turquoise for the sea and the bulk of the creature, and a contrasting orange for the sky. Using these colors I begin to sketch out my composition. I want to show Charybdis in the act of creating a whirlpool to drag an unwary boat into the depths.

The problem I'm faced with is that if I depict this from above the surface the swirling water will obscure Charybdis herself, whereas if I attempt the scene from below I'll have the same problem with the fishing boat. I therefore decide to split the composition between underwater for the bottom three-quarters of the canvas and open air for the rest. It's a cross-section, as if the scene has been sliced vertically (**Fig.02**).

I start with the sky, roughing in some clouds, and the surface of the water, which is undulating

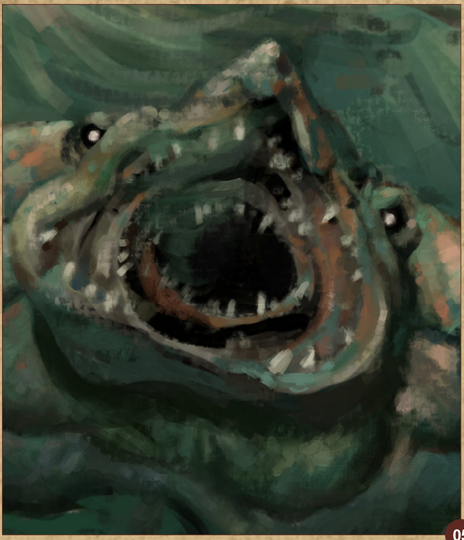


03

and choppy. Beneath the surface the effect of the sunlight decreases rapidly until at the bottom of the image the water is almost black. The sunlight that penetrates the surface is not uniform and forms beams due to the turbulence of the water, much like sunlight passing through gaps in cloud. In terms of the coloration there will be more orangey light present in the water close to the surface. As the light passes further into the depths it will become more and more blue/green in color. I exaggerate the turquoise hue for effect, but it is worthwhile noting that water is in fact blue, not colorless as is often thought, and this is clearly visible in large bodies of clear water. The deeper the water the deeper blue it appears.

Using References

Being that Charybdis is a character from Greek mythology it's fitting that the boat is of Greek design. I search out a likely contender using Google images and use the image as a loose reference for my own (**Fig.03**).



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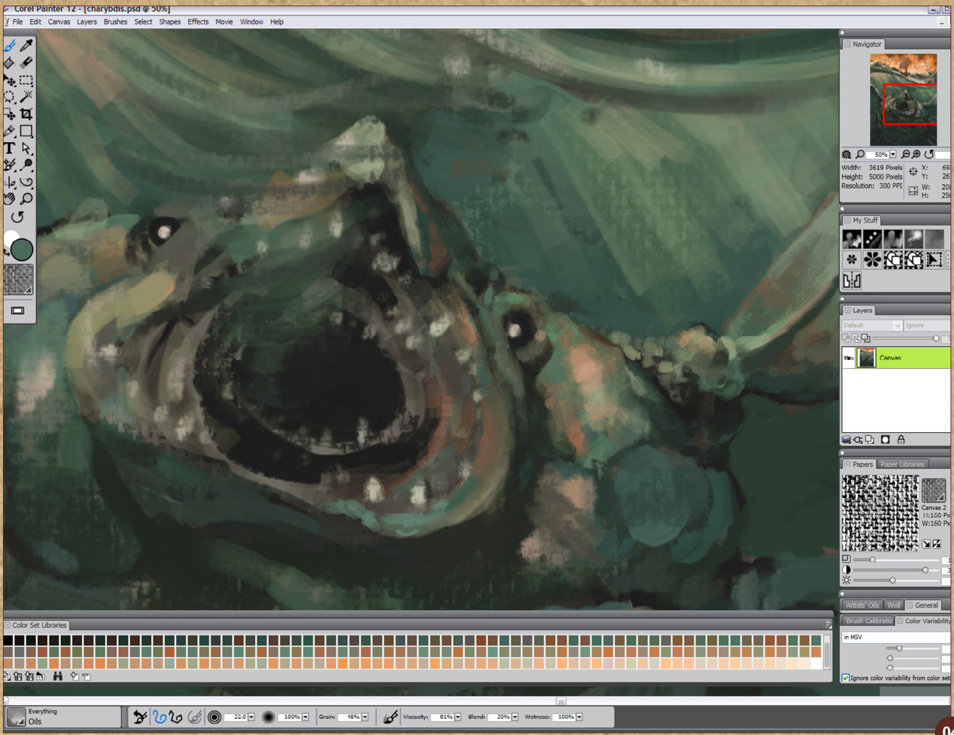


Corel Painter 12 - [charybdis.psd @ 50%]

Width: 3619 Pixels
Height: 5000 Pixels
Resolution: 300 PPI

Everything
Oils

22.0 100% Grain: 48% Viscosity: 81% Blend: 20% Wetness: 100%

04

Resample the Image

Unfortunately my Painter has just crashed and I've lost my Mixer palette! Rather than create another Mixer palette I use the Create Color Set From Image option on the Color Set palette, which generates color swatches based on the colors I've already painted. Happily this isn't part of the tutorial, just something I thought I'd mention in case anybody spots that my Mixer palette has disappeared!

I resize (or more accurately, resample) the image to full working size, which is 5000 pixels tall, making sure to keep my aspect ratio consistent with my specification. I often work larger than the specification requires and then downsize as my final step. This allows for finer detail. I zoom in to 50% and with an Artists' Oils brush, begin to dab in some basic detail. The Artists' Oils brush I use has Pressure-dependant opacity and Grain set to 50%. The grain option allows the paper texture to show through the strokes where the paint is thin. Papers are selectable from the Papers panel and it's worthwhile playing about with the size and contrast of your papers in order to get the most pleasing effect (**Fig.04**).

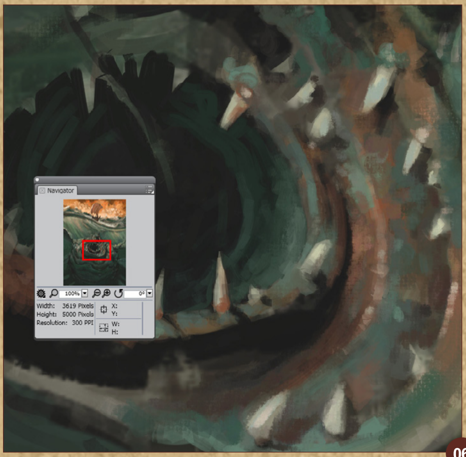
Adding Basic Detail

I start work on the monster's head and upper torso, making sure I don't go too bright with my values on account of the surface of the water reflecting away a good deal of sunlight. The closer an object is to the surface the more orangey light it will catch so this is why I include quite a lot of orange on the head and upper torso, and less and less on the body as it fades away into the murky depths.

I pay attention at all times to the direction of my light source in order to ensure the shadows are consistent. Later, I'll be adding a mottled pattern to simulate light shining through the waves, but for now I'm just treating the light source as I would in the open air (**Fig.05**).

Adding Fine Detail

Once I've roughed in the features on the head and torso I zoom in 100% for the detail. I don't usually have a plan as to which areas of the image I'll tackle first; I just make it up as I go along. This time I decide to complete the head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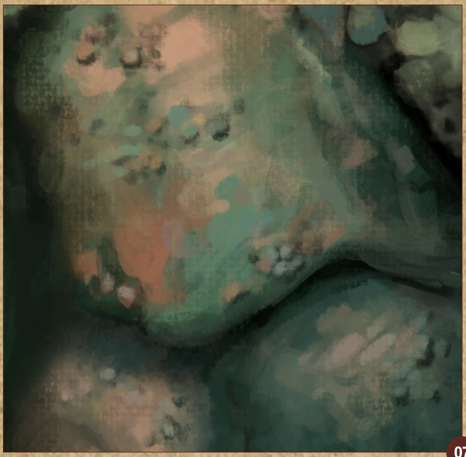
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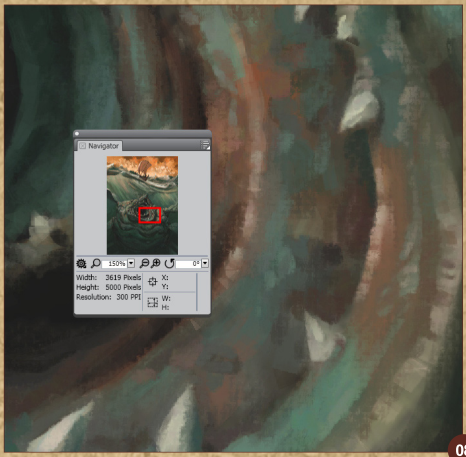
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and upper torso before going on to the rest of the image. As well as my Artists' Oils brush I use a circular, grainy brush also set to Pressure dependant opacity and with a subcategory of Grainy Soft Cover. I set this brush to around 18% Hue variability using the Color Variability panel. This gives a pleasing mottled effect to my strokes.

I have deliberately avoided making the creature's mouth too symmetrical so I can have fun sprinkling teeth and wobbling fleshy flanges all over the place. As always I use the Navigator to move the canvas as I find it quicker and easier than the drag method (**Fig.06**).

Painting Texture

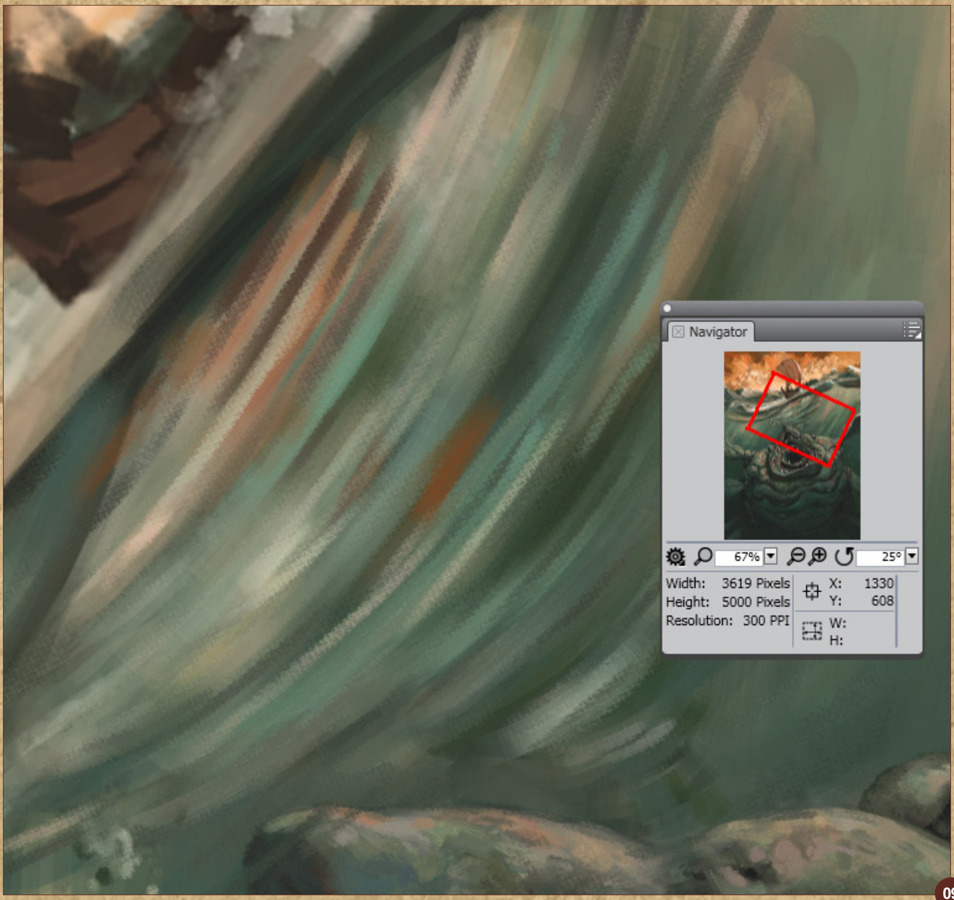
Texture can be communicated via brush strokes and also via Paper texture, but it can also be manually painted. Here I add some imperfections to the shell and skin of Charybdis whilst always being mindful of the direction of the light source. I include some barnacles, which I paint by dabbing bright dots on top of darker dots, leaving a small crescent of shadow underneath. Variations in color can either be blended together or their boundaries left sharp. I find it's good to use a combination of these effects to produce some pleasing textures (**Fig.07**).

Super-fine Detail

For the focus of the piece, which is the creature's head and mouth, I include some very fine detail. I zoom in to 150% and use my 3 or 4 pixel circular brush to sharpen the teeth and to create some more intricate textures around the gums. Working this small doesn't mean I should sharpen every line – that would make it too clinical-looking – it's more a way of accentuating key areas to attract the viewer's eye (**Fig.08**).

Tilting the Canvas

If you're like me and drawing a good curved line is a challenge at the best of times then you might find Painter 12's Rotate facility useful. By clicking on the Rotate Page icon on the toolbar, then dragging the cursor across the image, you can rotate your canvas quickly and easily to any orientation. You can then paint just as you would normally and when you're done, reset the orientation by double-clicking the icon or clicking the Reset Rotation icon in the Navigator. Rotating your image doesn't affect the actual pixels so you can do it as many times as you like. You can also rotate by pressing Spacebar and Alt and holding them down together as you drag your cursor (**Fig.09**).



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25°
Width: 3619 Pixels
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H:

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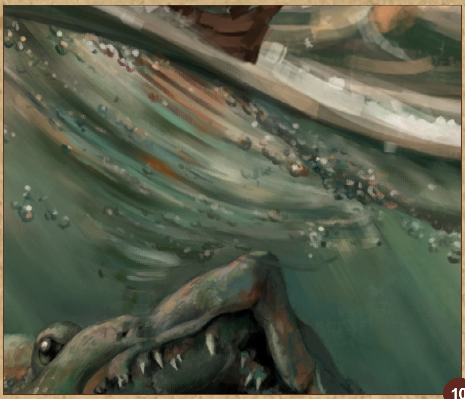

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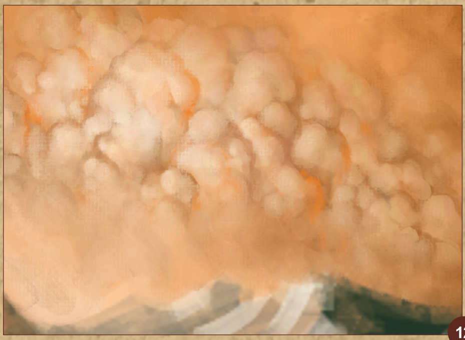
Turbulent Water

The thought of painting water in motion is intimidating, but in actual fact it's quite easy if you take it steady. The first step is to get the colors down. We've already got the hues sorted for the basic ocean depths so now we need to create a whirlpool effect. To do this I color pick brights and darks from the immediate environment and sketch a series of arcs in an inverted pyramid. I use a light pressure on my pen so that I don't create anything too solid-looking. I try not to make the pattern of lights and darks too regular as I don't want the whirlpool to look striped. The boat is almost at the centre of the whirlpool and this means that light reflected from its hull and sail will be picked up by the swirling water. So, using browns and oranges I paint hints of reflection in the ocean below the boat (**Fig.10**).

The next step is to blend our colors. I use a version of my circular brush set to 0% Resaturation. It's important not to blend too much, so I calibrate my brush using the Brush Calibration panel to respond only to hard pressure. This makes it easier to apply a light touch.



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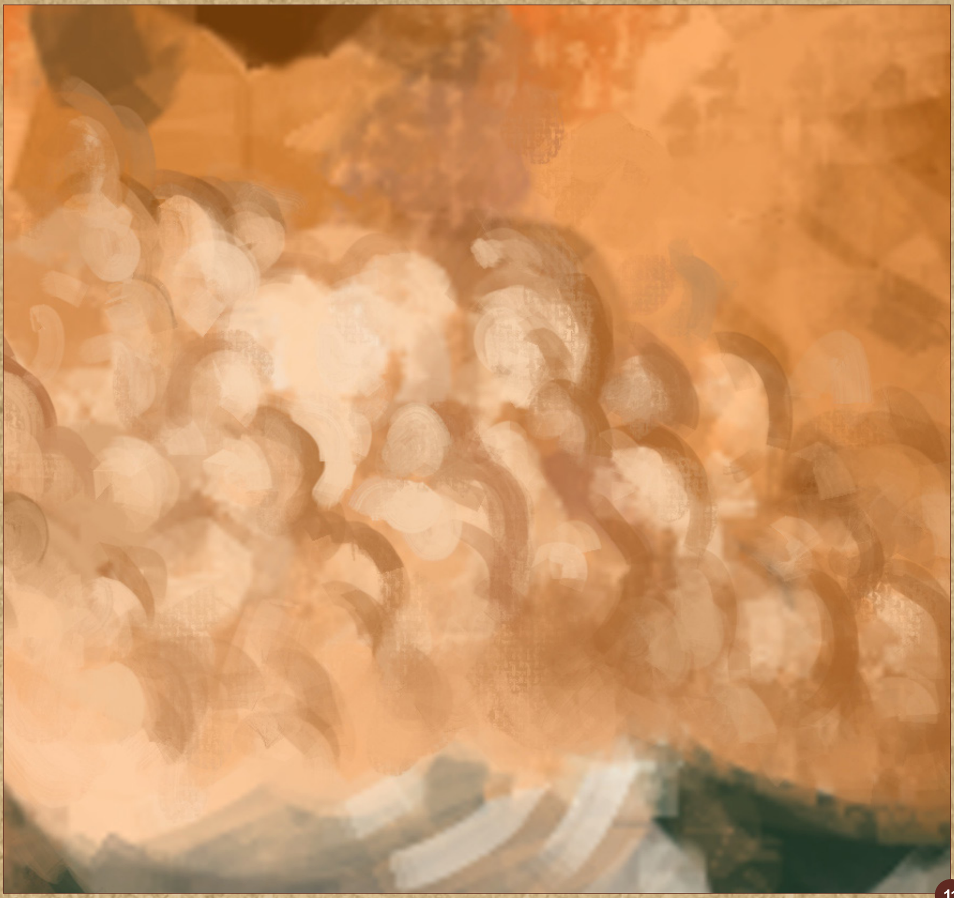

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Last of all are the bubbles. I draw the bubbles in little groups that either follow the swirl direction of the whirlpool or cling to the surface in the general vicinity. For each bubble I paint a dark, slightly irregular arc representing the lower part of the bubble and a bright highlight representing the top. Inside the bubble I'll sometimes dab a hint of color, either brown for reflection of the boat or the monster's skin, or turquoise to represent the depths beneath. I am careful to make my bubbles slightly irregular and different sizes to give a more authentic effect.

Little Fluffy Clouds

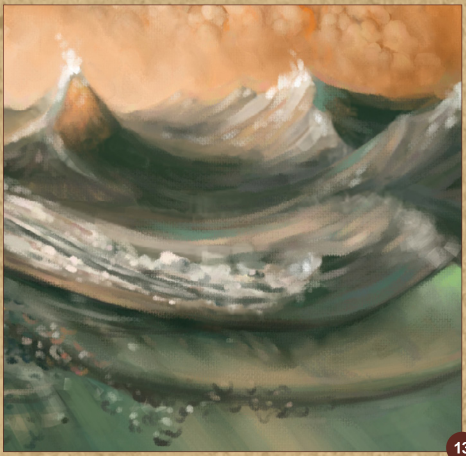
To add interest the piece I'm going to paint some fluffy clouds on the horizon. I'm deliberately going for a semi-surreal effect because I think that will fit in well with the overall concept of mythology. Using my Artists' Oils brush I paint a series of dark arcs directly onto the rough texture of the sky. I press harder on the side opposite the light source (the Sun) in order to indicate shadow. I make the arcs smooth and vary them slightly in size. I'm also careful not to make their positioning too regular. When that's done I choose a brighter orange and basically just fill in the pattern I've created, taking care to leave more dark paint visible on the side opposite the light source (**Fig.11**).

Blending the Clouds

Blending is a two stage process. First I use low-pressure dabs of the circular brush to add blended highlights, and I also introduce some high contrast oranges into the shadows to add interest. Then, with the pure blending brush, I blend the centres of the cloud billows whilst taking care to leave the edges relatively sharp. A good guide when blending at this stage is to only blend colors that are similar. If you try to blend across too great a range the result will often be a muddy mess. I blend the rest of the sky using the same technique (**Fig.12**).

Waves

When painting the surface of the ocean it's important to use free-flowing strokes, blending as required. I use quite a lot of orange to



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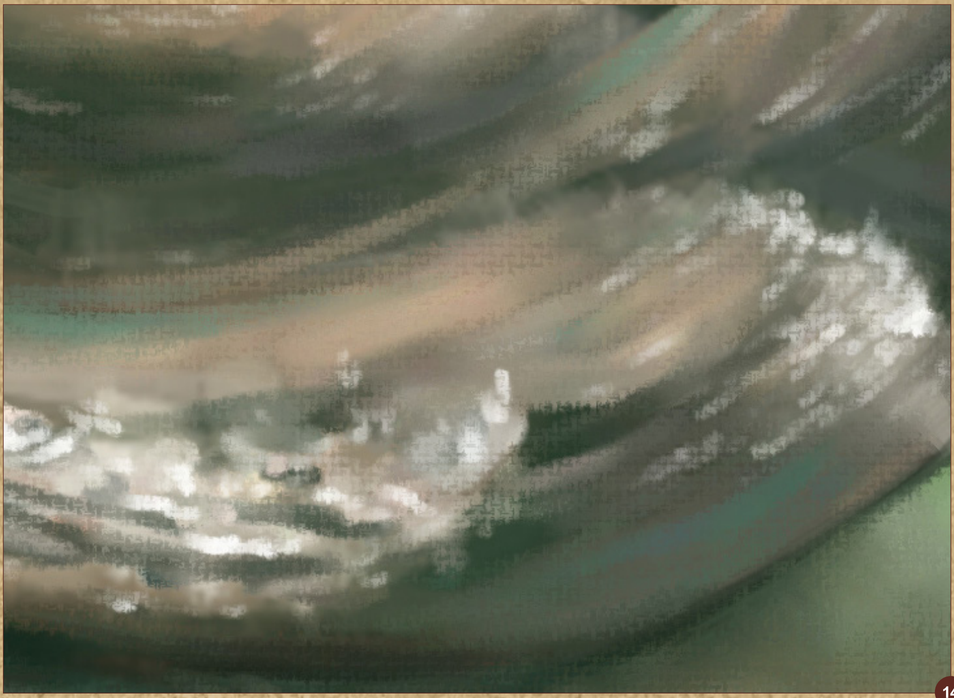

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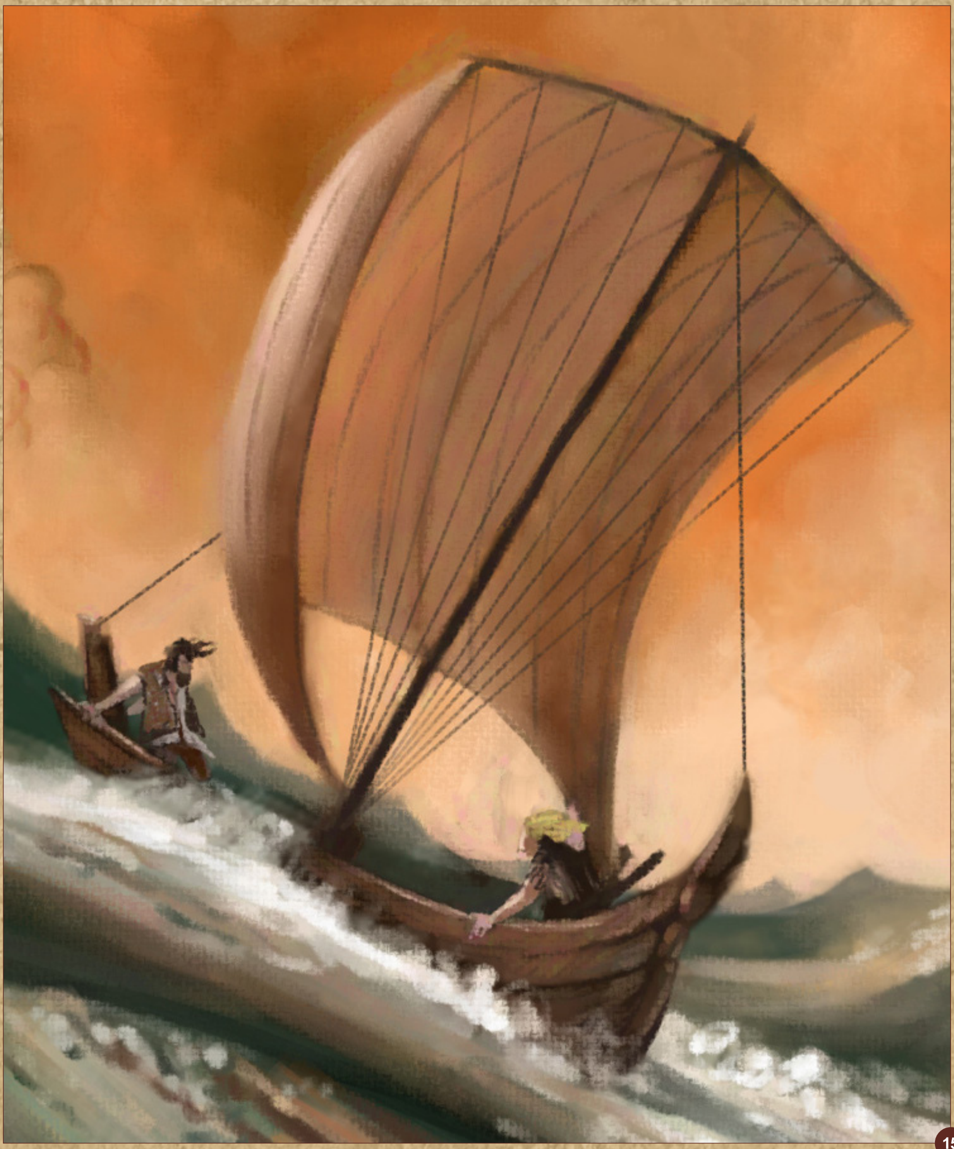

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represent light reflected from the sky. Some of the orange color penetrates the surface in the form of rays, but they decrease in size and intensity as depth increases. In the peaks of a couple of the waves I use high saturation color to communicate the transparency of the water, otherwise it would appear too solid (**Fig.13**).

Wavy Detail

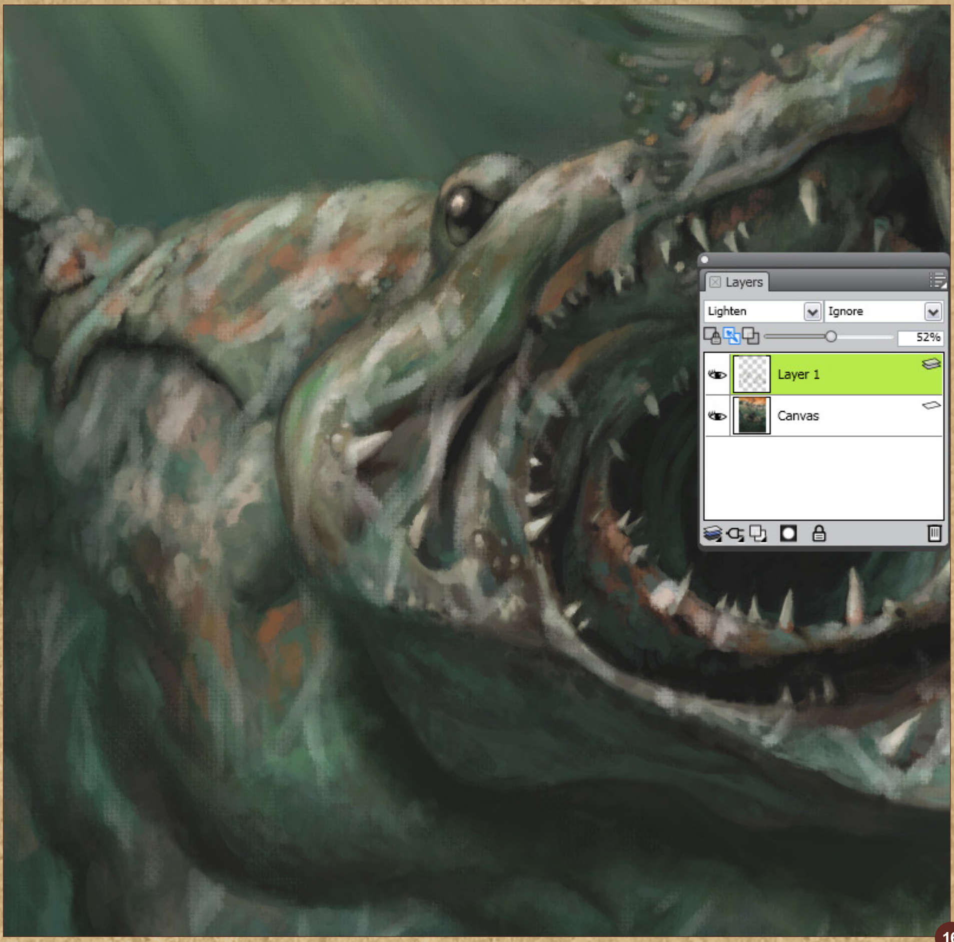
I zoom in to 100% to add fine detail on the ocean surface, which mainly comprises of flecks of foam from the crests of the waves. I also include some extra foam and bubbles to emphasise the turbulence of the whirlpool (**Fig.14**).

Detailing the Boat

Working loosely from my reference image I apply detail to the Greek fishing boat. I start by blending the colors on the sail and adding some more saturated orange to indicate sunlight passing through the material. The corners of the sail are out of direct sunlight, so I beef up the shadows in those areas. I paint the two characters at opposite ends of the boat, clinging on for dear life as the boat goes under. For the ropes supporting the sail I use the straight Line tool, pressing V to enter line mode and clicking on the start- and end-points. To return to normal painting mode I press B (**Fig.15**).

Undersea Lighting

In the penultimate stage I want to add some additional lighting to Charybdis. When strong sunlight shines on turbulent water it creates a rippling pattern of highlights on objects beneath the surface and that's what I'm trying to replicate here. Because it's very difficult to judge the exact strength of the lighting I'm going to use a layer. In this way I can alter the layer's opacity and even delete it and start again if it all goes wrong. I create my layer with a Lighten attribute and set it to 50% initially. With my circular brush I apply some low-pressure white strokes in vague diamond shapes across the monster's body. I am careful not to extend these highlights into the shadows because they only occur where the light strikes directly. I try and mould the shapes to the body form too, so that it appears like we're wrapping the effect around a real object rather than just applying a flat filter. When I'm happy with the overall look I adjust the layer opacity, drop the layer to the canvas, zoom in 100% and tidy up here and there (**Fig.16**).



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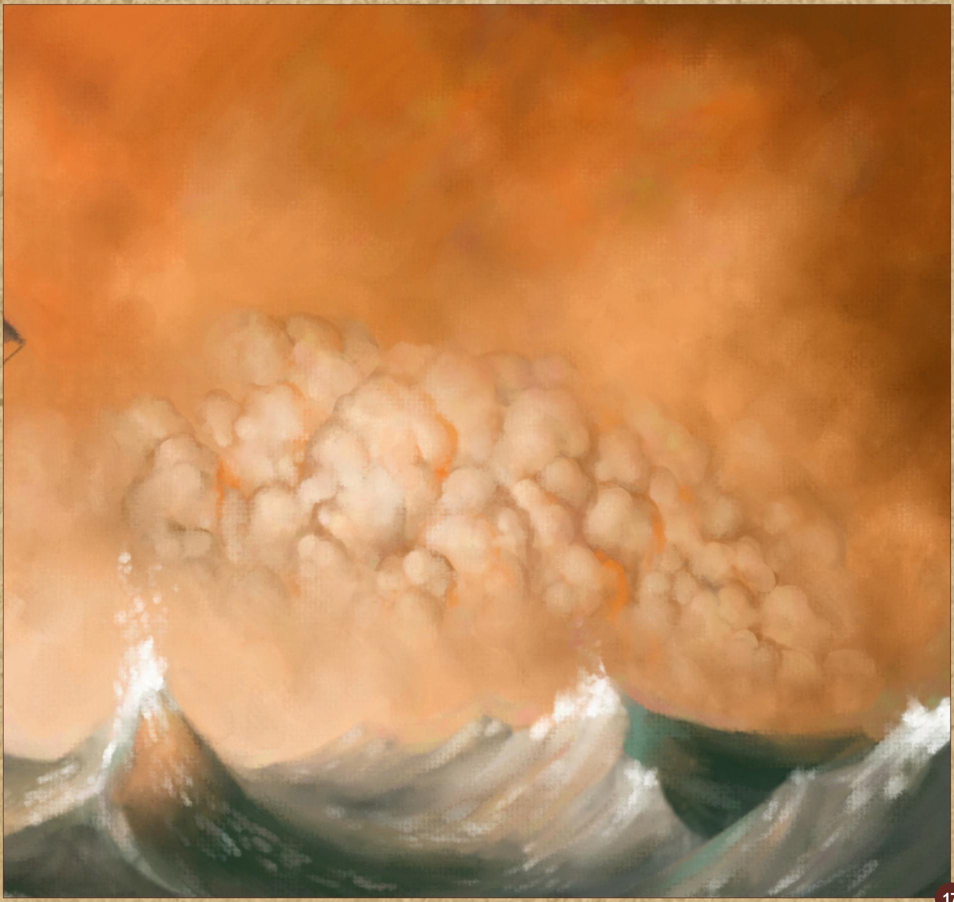
Final Tweaks

At this point I take a break from the image and come back to it a few days later. This helps give me a fresh perspective. I think everything looks okay apart from a couple of dark clouds in the top right, which tend to draw the eye and detract from the action. With a big Artists' Oils brush I paint over the clouds with brighter colors then use the circular brush and blender to merge the area back into the sky. Finally I resize my image down to 2480 x 3425 pixels, tweak the contrast a little to enhance the intensity and save the image as an uncompressed TIF file. And that's Charybdis completed; I hope you enjoyed the process (**Fig.17**).



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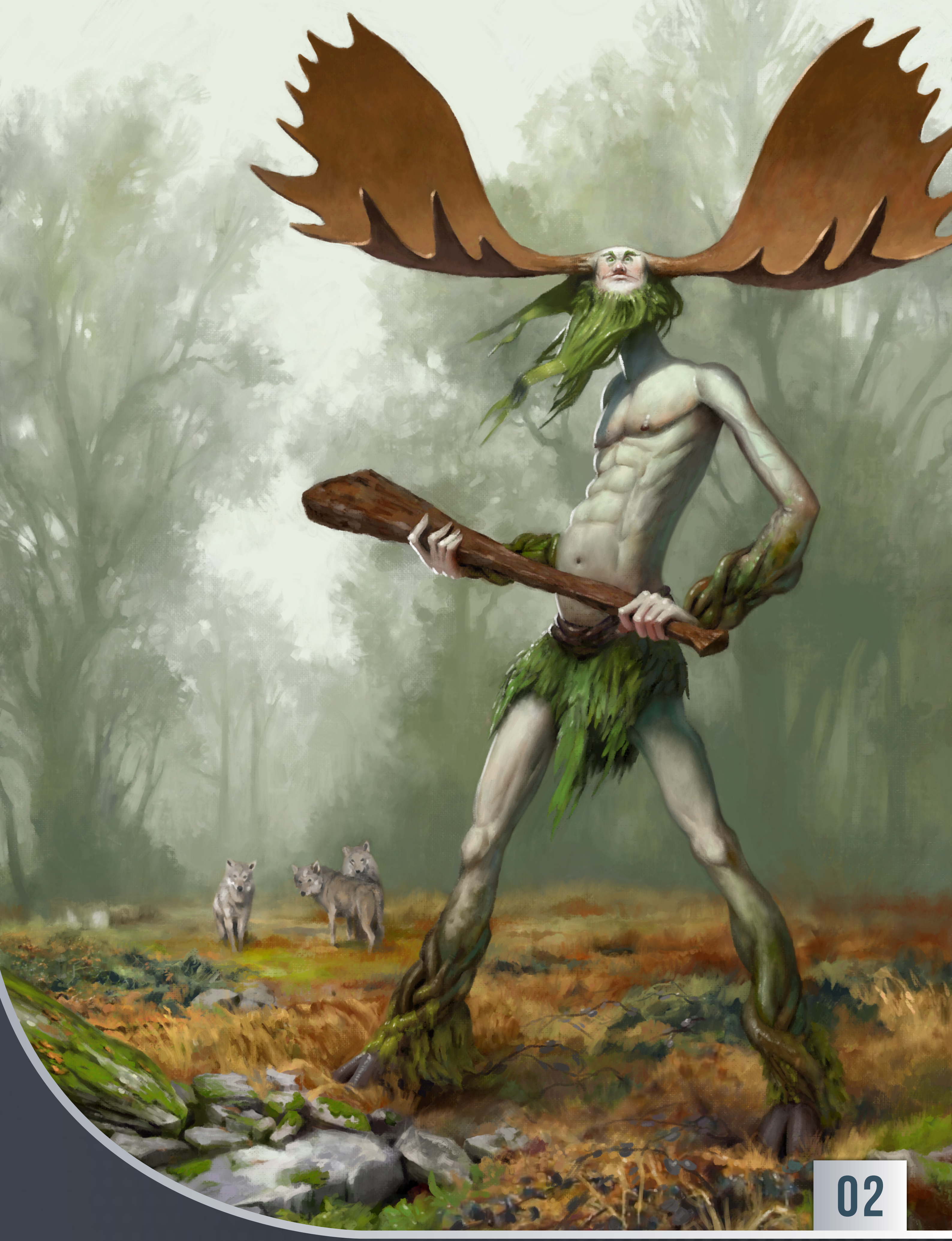


02

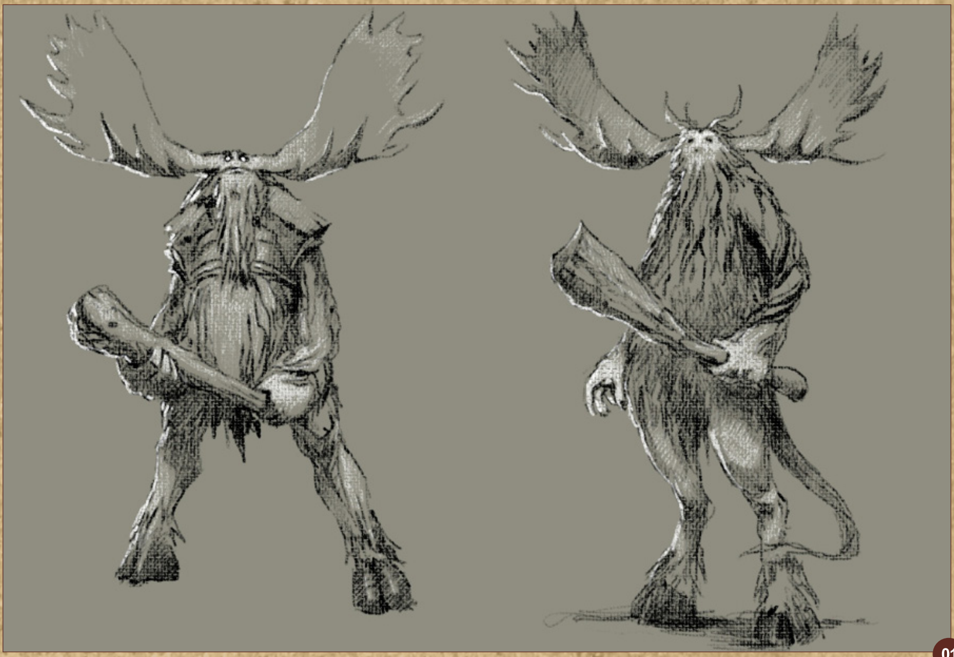
LESHY

Chapter 02: Leshy

Software Used: Painter

The Leshy is a forest-dwelling creature from mythology who is able to change size from the smallest blade of grass to the tallest tree. He appears in the form of a pale-skinned man with green eyes and a beard made from grass and vines, and is sometimes rumored to have a tail, hooves and horns. The Leshy is the friend of other forest denizens and is often depicted in the company of bears or gray wolves. Because his official title is Lord of the Forest he carries a wooden club, presumably in case anyone disputes it.

For this tutorial I'll be using Painter 12 to illustrate the Leshy in his native habitat. I did wonder whether to show the Leshy in miniature form, but I think that would make him too ineffective-looking, so instead I'm opting for full-on giant mode.



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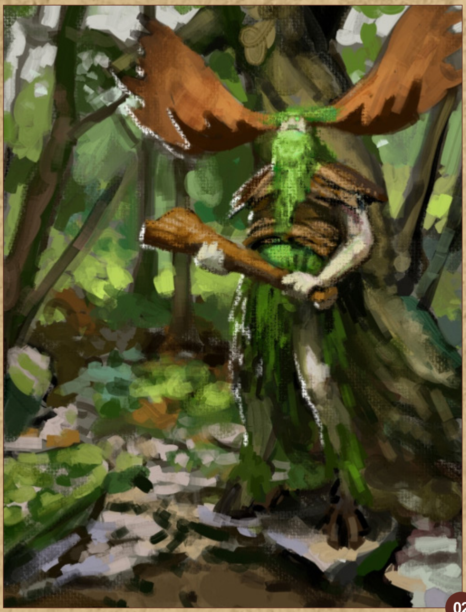


02

Concept Sketch

I quickly sketch several representations of the Leshy, with his grassy beard, hooves and club. I browsed some horned animals on the web and considered what different types of horn would look like. Goat and oxen horns would make him appear too demonic and bull horns too mundane, so I went with moose antlers which fit in well with the woodland environment. To simulate a pencil I use a circular brush set to Grainy Soft Cover, with Pressure-dependent Opacity set to 100% and 95% Grain. The Grain setting allows me to give that characteristic charcoal roughness when I boost the contrast of the paper settings. I also sketch in some bright highlights to help give the concepts dimension and form (**Fig.01**).

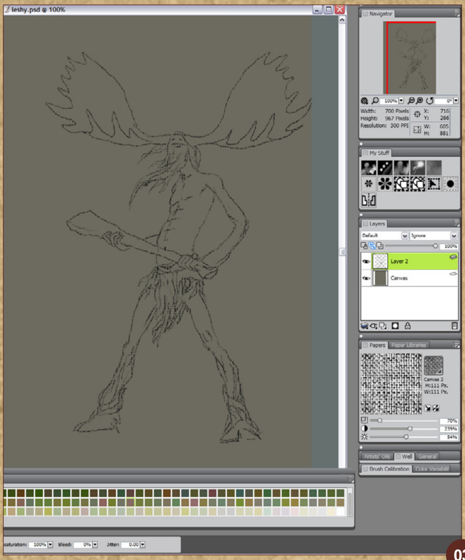
Color Concept

I then paint another concept of my chosen character, this time in color. I paint it small and quickly, taking about 10 minutes. The idea with the color concept is that it gives me a feel of how the finished image might look in terms of color and composition. I decide that despite my initial sketch appearing OK, the Leshy strikes me as too human looking, more like an old bloke with a green beard than a mystical Lord of the Forest. For that reason I go back to my sketching and create another concept, this time depicting the Leshy as thinner and less human in appearance (**Fig.02**).

Outline sketch

I collect a few reference photos to help me with key areas such as the Leshy's pose and the forest floor. Next I create a 1448 x 2000 pixel canvas in a low value color. I don't like starting with a pure white canvas as I find it a bit dazzling and also it prevents you from adding highlights in the sketch stage.

On this new canvas I create a layer onto which I sketch my new, slim-line Leshy, referring to my character reference to get a general idea of the torso anatomy and the hand positions when gripping the wooden club (**Fig.03**).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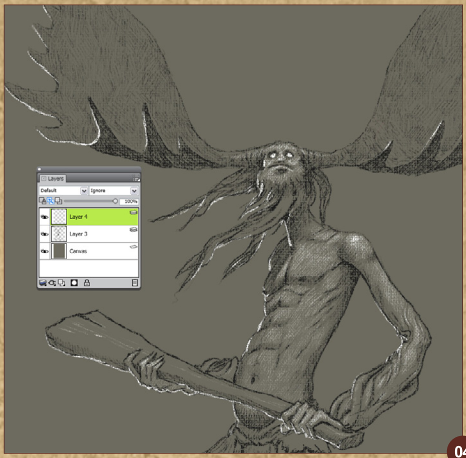
Filling out the Sketch

Once I complete the outline sketch in black pencil I add areas of shadow. I don't press too hard as I want the texture of the paper to show through. The final sketch stage is to create another layer above the sketch layer. This is my highlight layer. I switch to white and sketch over the areas that are affected by my primary light source, the sun, which will be above the character and slightly to its right (the left as we see it here) (**Fig.04**).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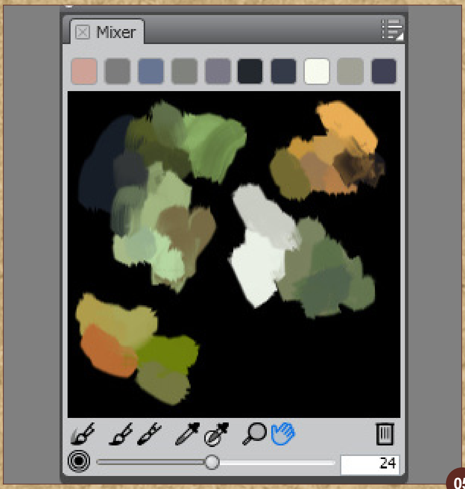
Creating a Palette

After browsing my reference photos I now create a color palette. I display my Mixer palette, clear it and dab onto it a new selection of colors based on the most prevalent colors in my reference photos. I have decided my scene will be damp and misty so I keep most of my colors in the mid to low saturation range whilst ensuring they cover a full range of values (light to dark).

When I've got the basic colors down I use the New Color Set From Mixer Pad option in the Mixer panel menu. This gives me a number of swatches in my Color Set Library panel, some of which I delete to keep the size manageable. I won't be sticking strictly to these colors, but they do give me a good base on which to start (**Fig.05**).



05

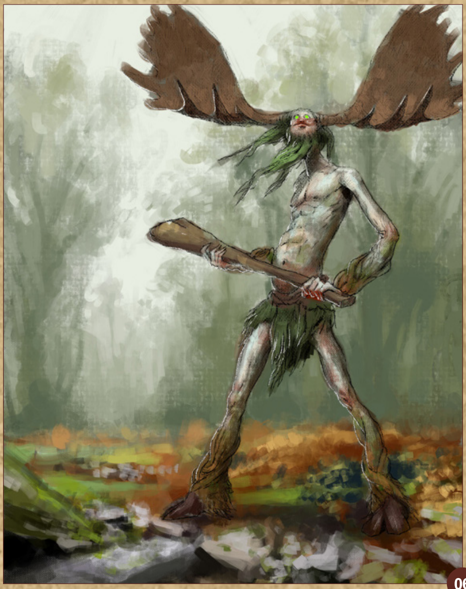
Blocking in Colors

Still working at a relatively small level (2000 pixels high) I apply color directly to the canvas beneath my two sketch layers. So now I have the canvas, which is blank; layer 1, which contains the color; layer 2, which has the black pencil lines on it and layer 3, which has the white pencil highlights in it.

I make the decision to have my Leshy standing in a woodland clearing so that he doesn't get lost amongst the trees (or get his antlers caught; I guess that's why he finds it useful to change size). As he is very tall in his current incarnation I paint the horizon line close to the bottom of the canvas. This gives the impression that he is towering above us. As a general rule, characters who are the same height as the viewer will have their eyes in line with the horizon no matter how far in the distance they appear, assuming a flat surface.

In the foreground I slop some bright and dark colors to represent rocks. The middle distance is dominated by grass and bracken with the odd clump of weeds and a mass of brambles thrown in for good measure. The nature of the vegetation may well change further down the line, but right now my priority is covering the canvas with paint to give me a representative base from which to go forward.

The forest itself is represented by the looming shapes of trees, painted using desaturated greens and browns to suggest distant objects on a misty day. The trees are too far away to explicitly detail all but the largest boughs and branches, so I use blobs of a lighter value to represent the networks of smaller twigs. In order to avoid the forest looking like a solid mass I dapple the edges of the tree forms with dabs of sky color, which gives the effect of individual clumps of branches through which patches of sky can be seen (**Fig.06**).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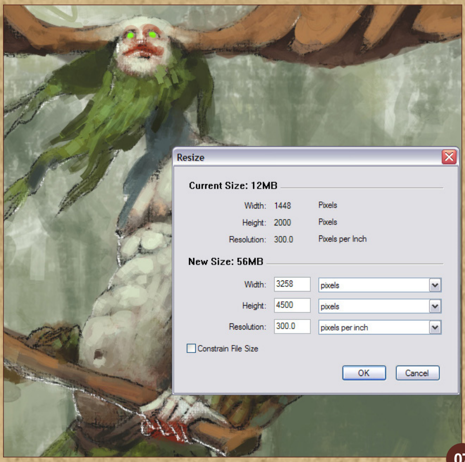

Resize

Current Size: 12MB
Width: 1448 Pixels
Height: 2000 Pixels
Resolution: 300.0 Pixels per Inch

New Size: 56MB
Width: 3258 pixels
Height: 4500 pixels
Resolution: 300.0 pixels per inch
☐ Constrain File Size

07

Resize Up

Once the color is blocked in I resize the image upwards whilst retaining the aspect ratio. So 1448 x 2000 pixels becomes 3528 x 4500 pixels. This is larger than my final image will be because I like to work at this size in order to easily paint fine detail. Zooming in to 100% now reveals a mess of textures and paint blobs. This is good; if it wasn't a mess I'd start to worry.

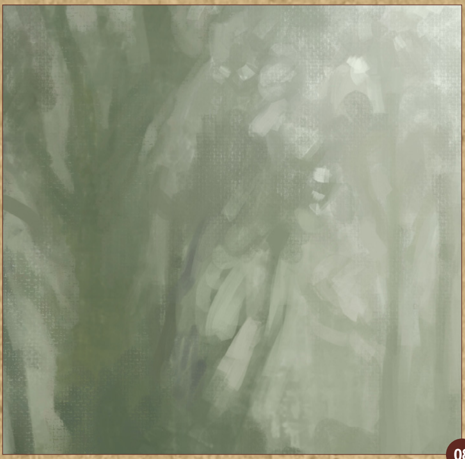
The textured, random nature of these brush strokes and blobs is very useful when painting vegetation and other non-ordered subjects. The human brain is not particularly good at inventing believable organic shapes from scratch, but it is good at finding patterns in randomness or semi-randomness. The messy brush strokes provide good stimulus from which embryonic clumps of grass, rocks and branches can emerge (**Fig.07**).

Painting the Forest

Using an Artists Oil's brush with 50% Grain I add detail to the background forest. I use value as a method of communicating depth, with trees nearer the viewer being of lower value than those further away. I keep my strokes relatively loose so that they don't overwhelm my main character with detail. Also, I make sure my brush stokes aren't too sharp, for the same reason (**Fig.08**).

Suggesting Branches

Against the outer edges of the paint blobs representing the branches I etch lines of sky color. This gives the impression of branches being present without my having to laboriously paint every one of them. I allow some of the original texture to remain in the main body of the tree, smoothing it over very lightly with a blending brush so that no pixilation remains from the original upsizing (**Fig.09**).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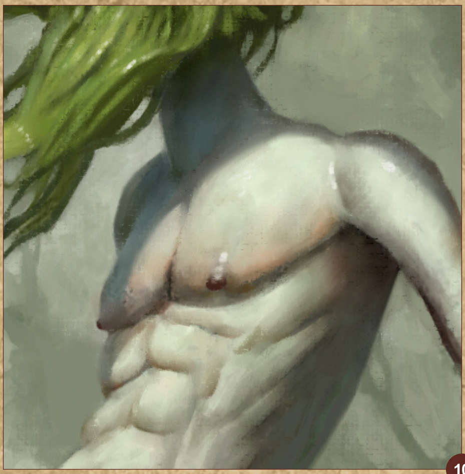
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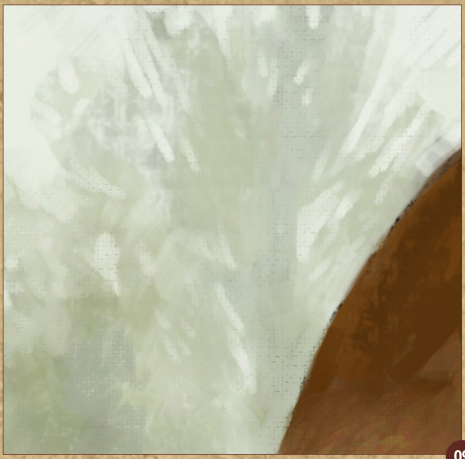
Creature Detail

I now move on to the creature itself. I tend to add detail to a blocked-in color image using a three-stage process. First, I use the Artists' Oils brush to further define the forms. The grain in the brush gives a nice textured effect and the pressure-dependent opacity ensures that a soft touch will blend the strokes (I always advise that in the General panel you set your Opacity to Pressure). A good tip when using Grain with Artists Oils is to set the Grain at around 50% because, oddly enough, increasing it beyond this value starts to decrease the effect.

For the next stage, which is the very fine detail, I'll use my circular pencil brush with added Bleed and low Resaturation. I only use this in the areas that need extra detail so I don't go over the whole thing again. Lastly, I use a blending brush to subtly merge similarly colored areas of paints in areas that need it. I'm very careful not to blend too much and to leave sharp boundaries where necessary (**Fig.10**).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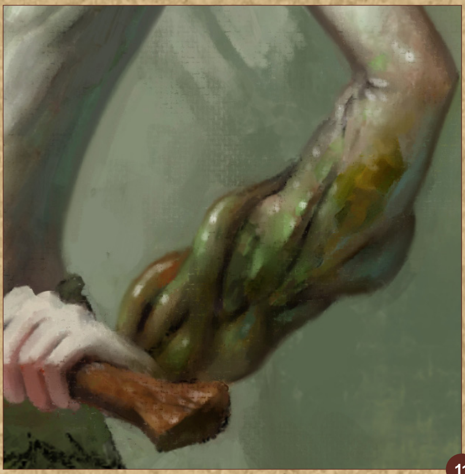
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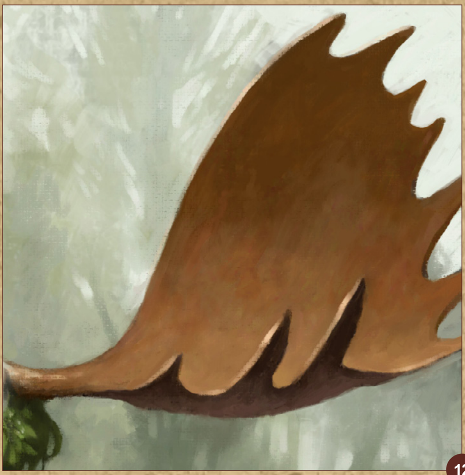
Leshy Limbs

The arms and legs of my Leshy are composed partially of mossy roots that merge into the flesh of the forearms and shins. I paint these vegetation areas with darker greens, browns and reds. In order to give the impression of dark coloration rather than shadow, I include some specular highlights – little dots of bright paint reflecting the main light source (**Fig.11**).

Painting Antlers

I loosely reference the shape of a pair of antlers from a photo of a moose, simplifying and modifying them a little. The lighting in the photo does not match that of my image so I need to understand the shape of the antlers. The lower portion curves towards us and back up to point at the sky. The central and rear portion curves more gradually upwards, passing through the



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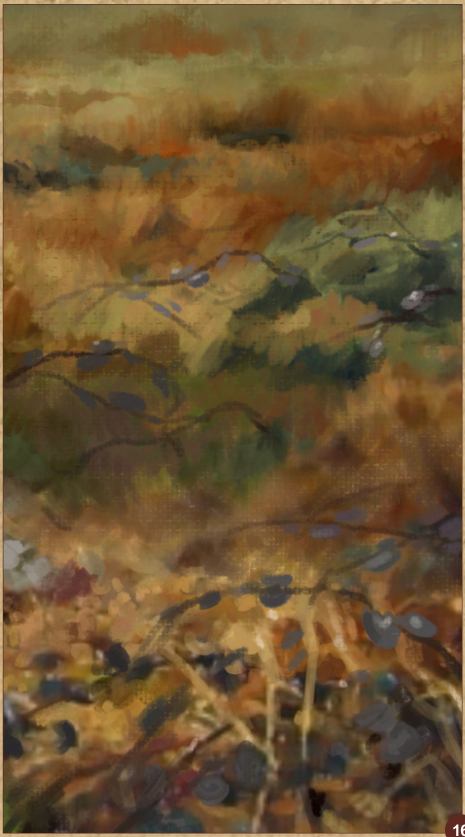
vertical and, right at the tip, curving back just a little towards us. When we combine this with the position of our light source it gives a deep shadow underneath the lower points contrasting with the bright surface above. The shadow increases with height as the antler becomes more oblique to the light. Along the edges of the antlers I add thin lines of highlight and shadow to show thickness, otherwise they would look like they're made of paper (**Fig.12**).

Just Add Wolves

According to the myth, the Leshy was often in the company of bears or gray wolves. I go for wolves and after I find a couple of reference images I paint three of the animals into the background using the small circular brush. I avoid using dark colors because the wolves are in the middle distance and therefore affected by the misty atmosphere. Because they are so far away we can't make out the grain of their fur so I use a mottling, blended effect to portray their coats (**Fig.13**).



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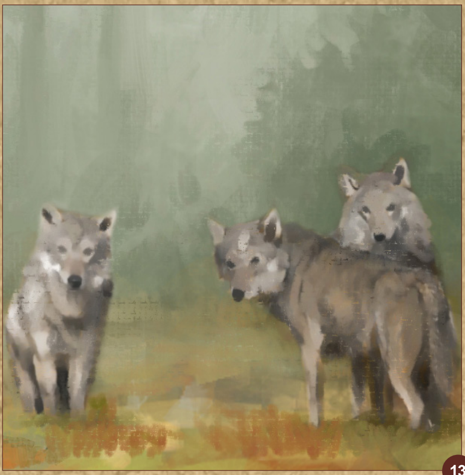

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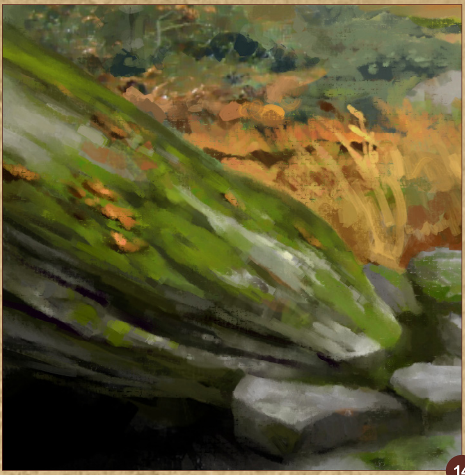
Mossy Rocks

In a damp environment like this rocks are likely to have moss on them. One useful tip for painting moss is to initially paint it using very dark colors then partially cover them with brighter greens. This helps give the impression that the moss has some thickness and is not just green paint smeared over the rock. For the rocks themselves I again use a combination of the Artists Oils brush and circular brush, the latter used primarily for detail. I set the color variability on the circular brush using the Color Variability panel. I set Hue, Value and Saturation to 18%, 1% and 1% respectively. This has the effect of a pronounced mottling of the hue (the color), and a slight variation of value (light and dark) and saturation on each brush dab (**Fig.14**).

Vegetation

The painting of vegetation can be approached in many different ways. This time I use the basic textures and colors already down on the canvas to sketch a dark, random mass of shapes representing grass, brambles and leaves. There are already a variety of shapes and patterns present from my initial coloring and these help with the impression of tangled foliage. With my blender brush I smooth this paint so that it appears out of focus. This is the background for my actual vegetation, which I paint on top using, mainly, brighter colors and sharper strokes. I use some reference for the different types of plant, e.g., mbrambles, but I take care not to add too much detail to any particular area (**Fig.15**).



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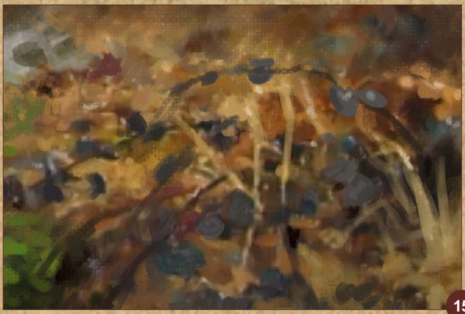

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Appropriate Detail

As the vegetation gets further away the detail decreases until it fades into ill-defined areas of color. When combined with the color fading this gives a good impression of depth and it ensures that our main character stands out against the background (**Fig.16**).

Finishing Off

As is customary I leave my image for a day or two then come back to it to see if anything else needs doing. I apply a bit more detail to the Leshy's face and blend some background areas that I had missed before (**Fig.17**). Last of all I save a copy of my image in TIF format at the specified size of 2480 x 3425 pixels. I ensure Resolution is set to 300ppi so that the image can be printed if required. That concludes the tutorial and I hope you've enjoyed it.

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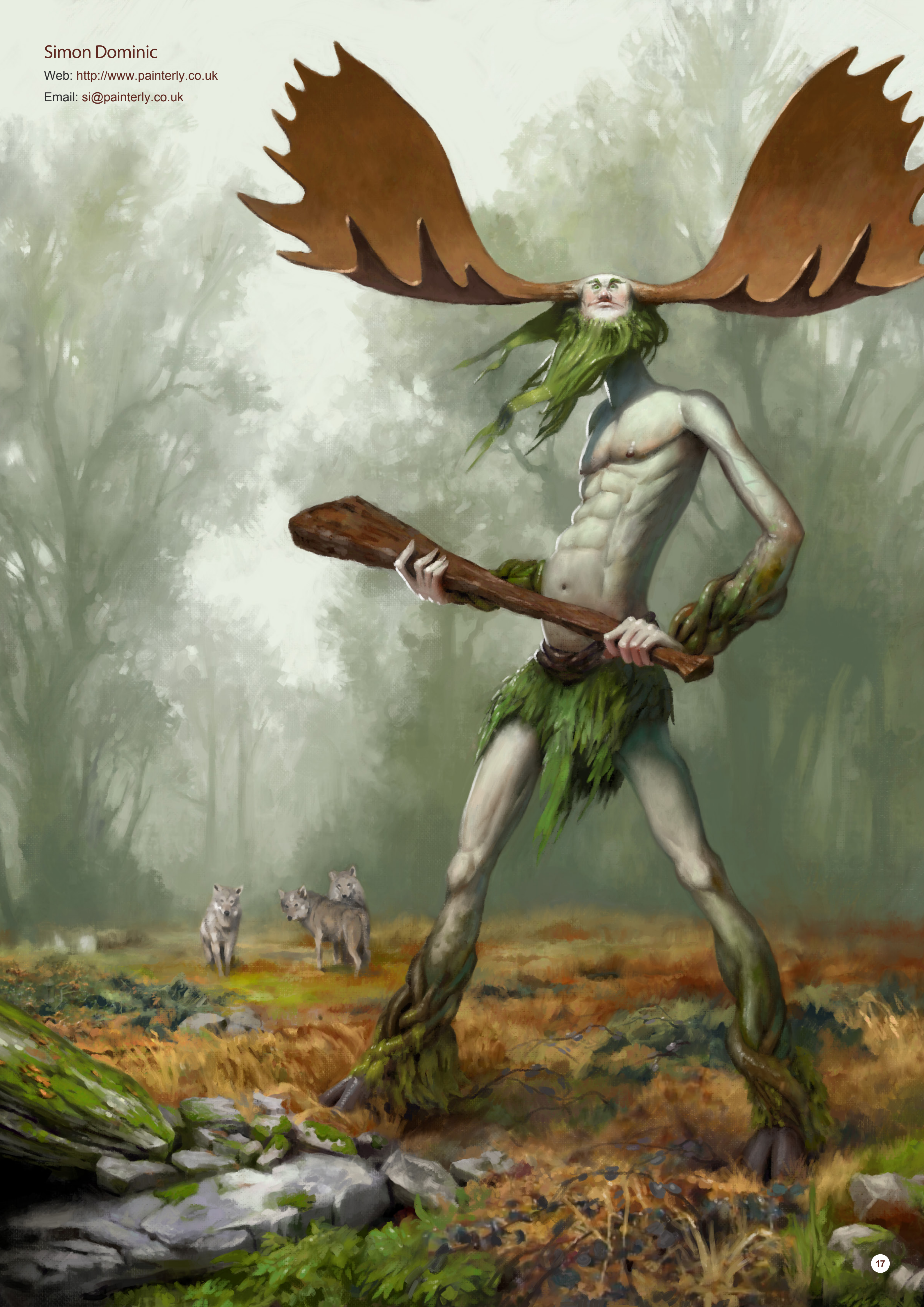
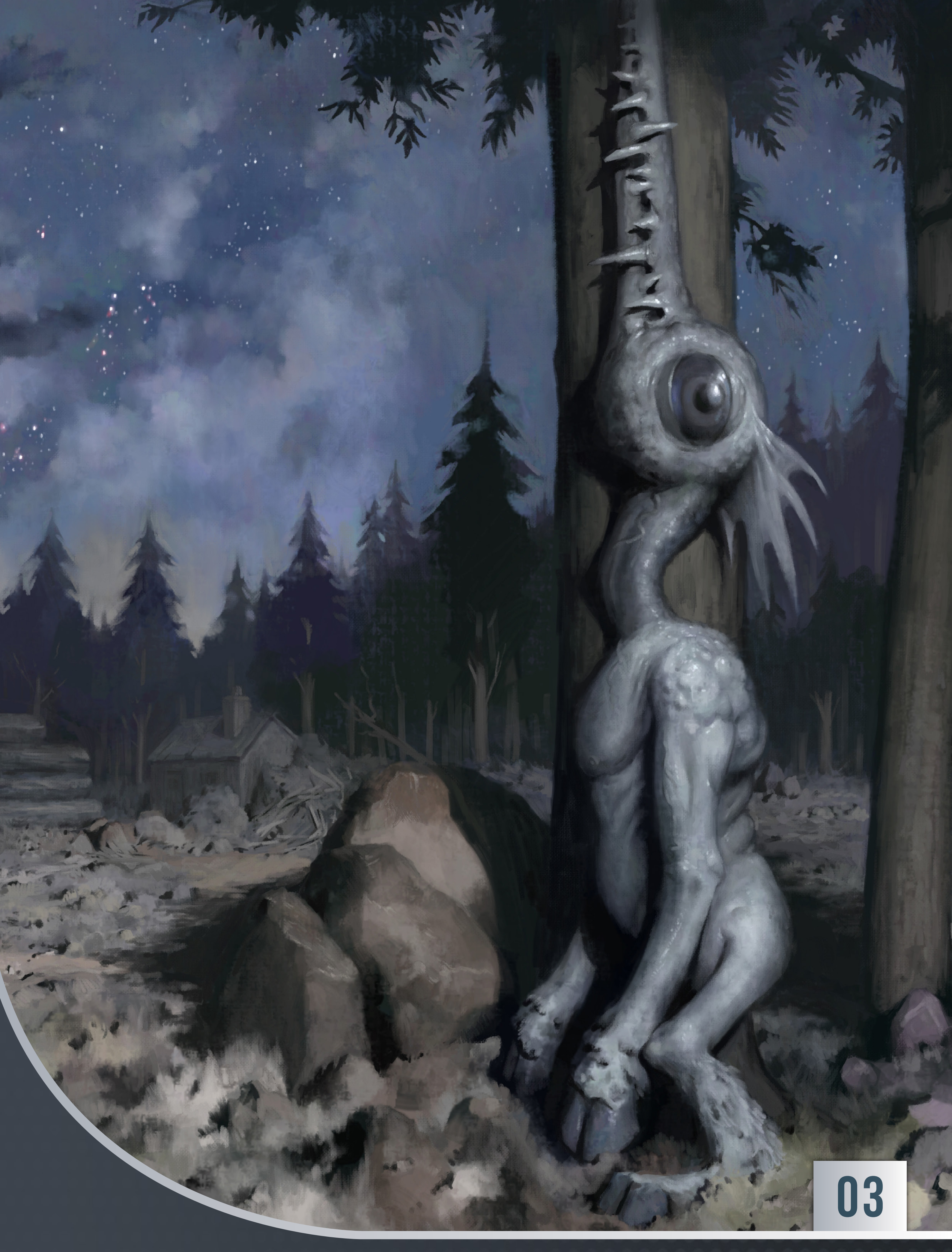




03

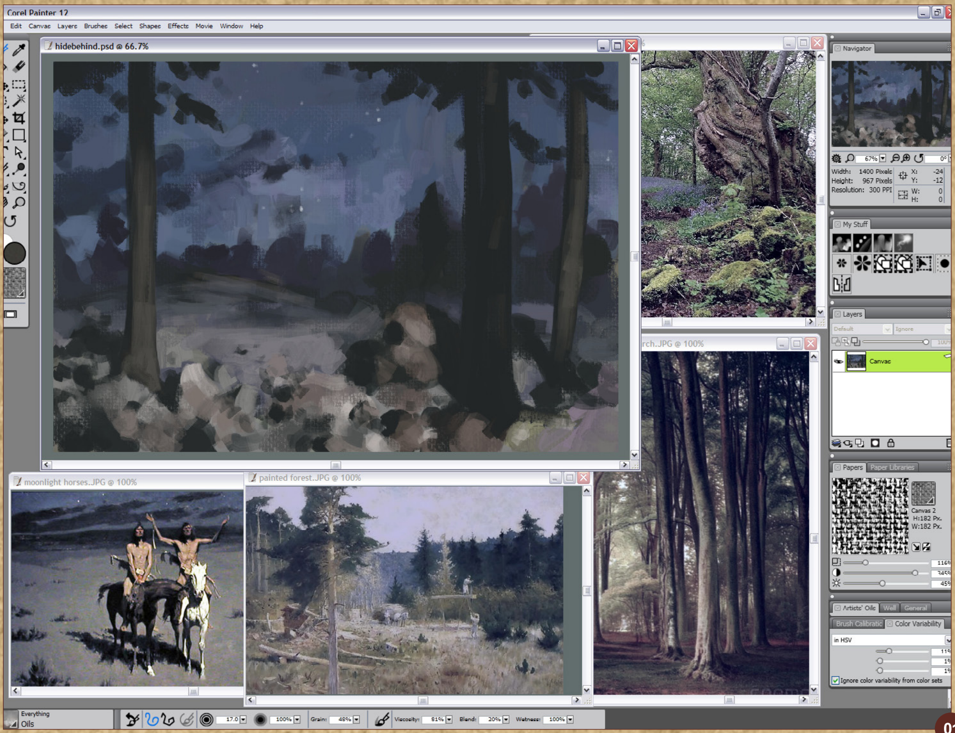
HIDEBEHIND

Chapter 03: Hidebehind

Software Used: Painter

Introduction

The somewhat unimaginatively named hidebehind is documented in American folklore and is reputed to be a fearsome, nocturnal creature that lives in the woods and preys on unsuspecting humans. Vicious and secretive, it was blamed for the disappearance of colonial loggers when they failed to return to camp. As you might have guessed, the key feature of the hidebehind is its ability to swiftly hide behind things, usually trees, whenever someone glances in its direction. The hidebehind is described as a large and powerful animal, although this is likely to be an assumption owing to the fact that nobody has ever seen one… or at least, seen one and lived.



01

In this tutorial, I'll be painting the hidebehind in its natural habitat. Because the creature has no official description other than big and fearsome, I needed to invent something of my own. Due to the nature of the hidebehind, I decided the image should be an environment-based piece and for this reason I worked in landscape format.

I used Painter 12 for the whole tutorial.

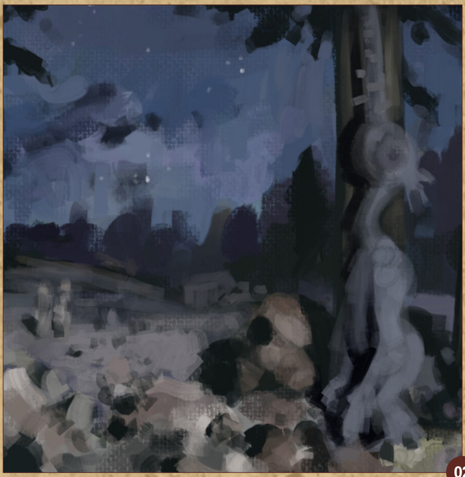
Gathering Reference and Making a Start

My first step was to gather some inspiration and get some sort of rough landscape down on canvas. For inspiration, I looked for photos and paintings of woodland and partially desaturated them so I could better see the tonal ranges. Seeing as the hidebehind is a nocturnal creature, my scene needed to take place at night, under a full moon. With this in mind, I checked out a couple of Frederic Remington paintings. Frederic Remington was an American painter who depicted a number of moonlit settings in his work. I took note of the palettes he used and the way he portrayed light and shadow, and tried to emulate that in my initial sketch.

Moonlight creates a different visual effect to sunlight, even though it is essentially the same thing. In our eyes, we have two constructs that allow us to see and these are called "cones" and "rods". Cones allow us to see colors and function well in bright light. Rods are very good at seeing in dim light, but are unable to perceive color. This means that in moonlight, which is many thousands of times dimmer than sunlight, we see using rods and can therefore perceive much less color than we can during the day.

Another attribute of moonlight is that it casts very dark shadows, because there is so little light being reflected from the sky and other parts of the landscape.

I created a small canvas of 1400 x 967 pixels, which represented the same aspect ratio as my



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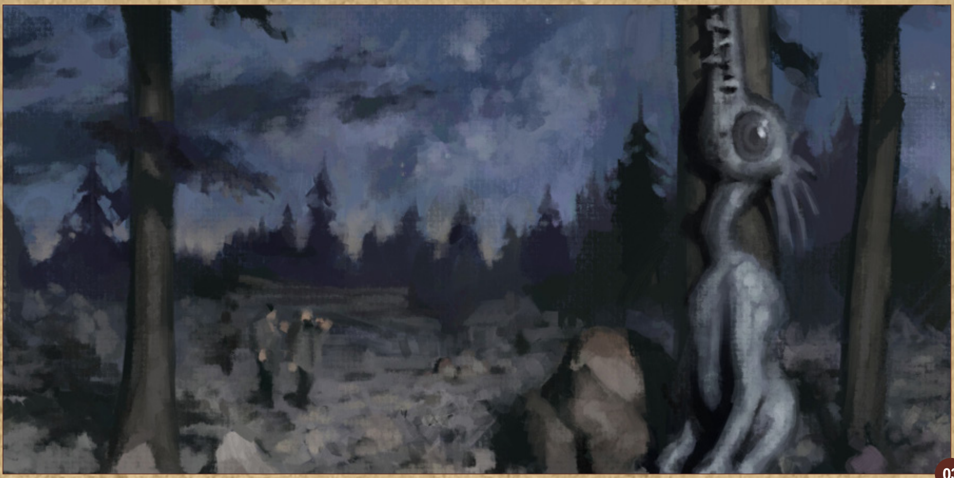

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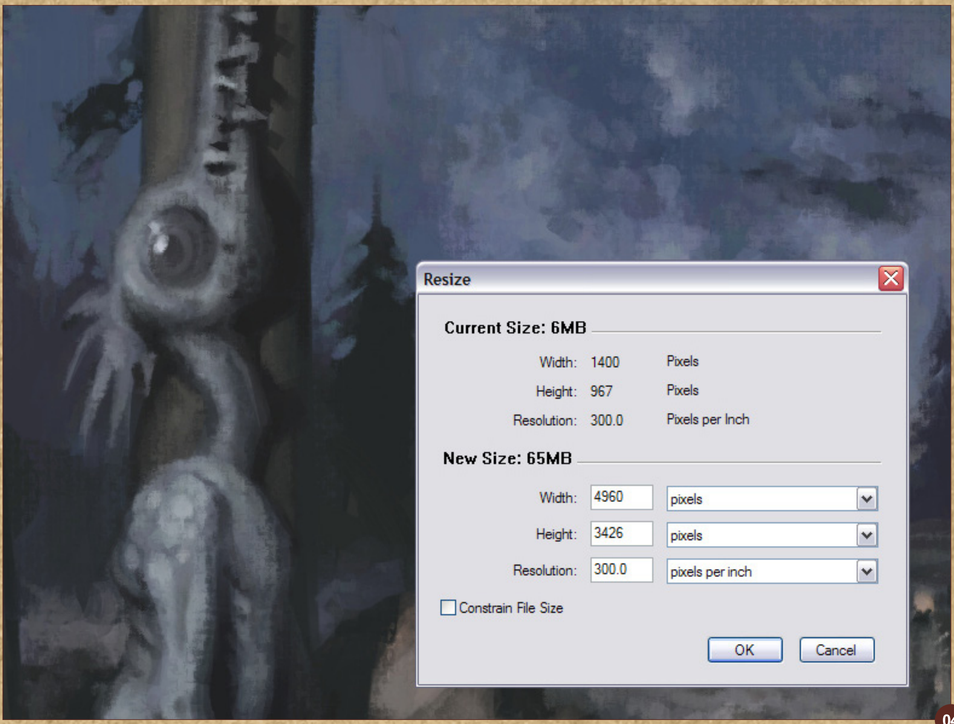


Resize

Current Size: 6MB

Width: 1400 Pixels
Height: 967 Pixels
Resolution: 300.0 Pixels per Inch

New Size: 65MB

Width: 4960 pixels
Height: 3426 pixels
Resolution: 300.0 pixels per inch

☐ Constrain File Size

04

intended final image. Working with a big Artists' Oils brush and a rough canvas Paper texture, I color-picked from a Frederic Remington piece to get the basic tones down, using very dark colors for the shadows and ensuring they were consistent with a bright moon somewhere over the viewer's right shoulder (**Fig.01**).

The Hidebehind

I included a large tree trunk in the foreground and it's behind this that the hidebehind would, er, hide behind! I considered making the creature man-like, but I thought that a humanoid creature concealing itself behind a tree is not a particularly difficult or a noteworthy feat. So I decided to make the hidebehind a quadruped, with long front legs and squat hindquarters. I also gave him a hugely long snout, like a crocodile. When he conceals himself amongst the trees he must sit back on his haunches and angle his head vertically, so that his snout does not poke out the side of his hiding place. In this way, we can communicate to the viewer that this behavior is something inherent to the hidebehind's nature and not just what he happens to be doing at the time.

I roughly sketched the creature's form, using my Artists' Oils brush, ensuring that the shadows were consistent with my primary light source, which was the full moon. I also gave him big, staring eyes on account of him being nocturnal (**Fig.02**).

Cementing the Basics

Still working small and painting roughly, I blocked in my colors across the whole canvas, making sure that all the main elements were where I wanted them to be and the lighting worked well. I included the figures of two loggers coming home from a hard day's work. I placed them left of centre, but not too far towards the edge or they'd become lost and the relationship between them and the hidebehind would not be as strong.

As usual, I frequently flipped the image horizontally as I progressed, in order to pick up things I would otherwise overlook (**Fig.03**).

Upsizing

When I was ready to begin work on the detail, I upsized my image to its final size - 4960 x 3426 pixels. The paper texture I'd been using in my rough stages was even more pronounced now and I tended to use it as a base to add random detail later on, such as grass and tree bark (**Fig.04**).

The Night Sky

The way I approached painting the sky was to have some distant, fuzzy clouds lit by moonlight and some closer, dark clouds that are maybe the remnants of a rainstorm. I represented the clear sky using a deep, low-saturation blue and later I dotted some stars in there. Go out during the full moon, under a clear sky, and let your eyes adjust for a few minutes. You'll see that the sky is actually several shades lighter than the horizon and so in this piece, I tried to replicate that effect, exaggerating it slightly for emphasis.

05

06

I added a hint of warmth to the horizon to represent the lingering light of the sun (**Fig.05**).

Blending the Sky

Once I was happy with the overall look of the sky, I set about blending the colors for a more convincing cloudy effect. I did this in two stages. First, I used a basic circular brush set to Grainy Soft Cover and with Opacity set to Expression Pressure. I also set the Color Variability to H: 18%, S: 1%, V: 1%. This meant that every dab would vary noticeably in terms of hue (color) and only very slightly in terms of saturation and value (also called tone, or light and dark). The greater the saturation, the more obvious the hue variation is, so because I was using low saturation colors the variation is still quite subtle. It results in faint purples and greens being present when painting with a blue brush and I found that helped to replicate the look of the eyes in a low-light environment.

When I'd gone over the sky areas with the round brush, I used an Artists' Oils brush with Amount set to 0% and Grain set to 50%, for proper blending. I used this brush sparingly, teasing the edges of the clouds and blending the areas of open sky a little more strongly (**Fig.06**).

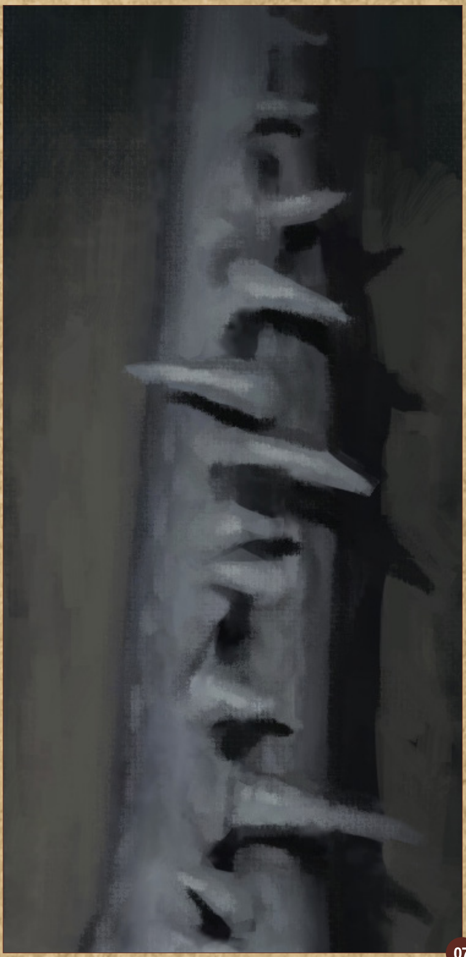
Teeth

The creature's muzzle is basically a long beak lined with teeth. I faded it into darkness towards the top of the canvas so that it does not lead the viewer's gaze out of the image. I was also careful to include the black shadows in their appropriate places, as these related to the position of the moon.

Because the moonlight is so dim, I resisted the urge to use a lot of bright highlights. I used the occasional bright specular reflection later, but overall I kept the values restrained in the mid to dark range. In terms of color, I gave the creature a blue tint and the tree trunk a brown tint, to provide a better distinction between the two (**Fig.07**).

Painting the Eye

I gave my hidebehind a huge staring eye, all the better for him to see his prey at night. First, I painted a dark circle to represent the full eye, followed by a lighter iris. On the surface facing



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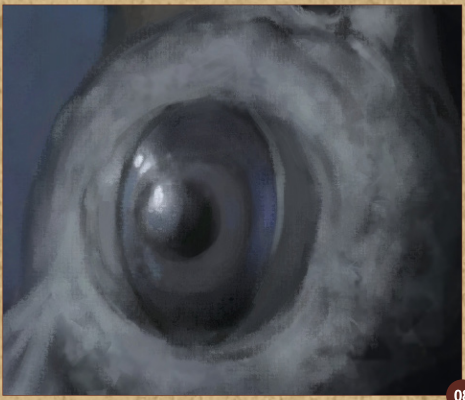
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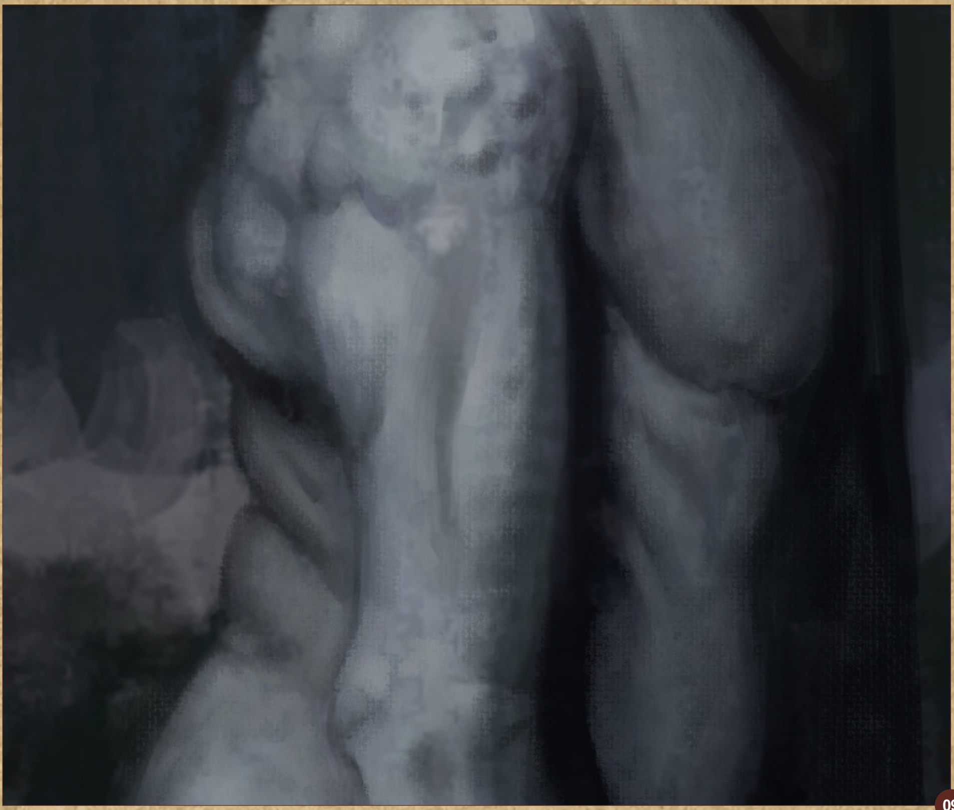
the off-canvas moon, I painted a couple of specular highlights. Around the highlights, I also painted a diffused area of lesser brightness to simulate the surface film over the eye. On the side of the eye opposite to where the moonlight falls, I dabbed a little higher contrast blue, as if the light is passing through the transparent eye and emerging on the other side. Last of all, I add a couple of eyelids, adding a shadow line on the top one and a highlight line on the lower one, in order to give the impression they have thickness.

It's perfectly fine to use layers when painting something like this, but usually I don't. I find that working directly onto the canvas concentrates the mind and forces me to understand how each brush stroke affects the existing paint. Also, I find more than a couple of layers confusing and always end up painting on the wrong one! (**Fig.08**).

Alien Muscles

Just to clarify, I mean alien as in "unusual", not extraterrestrial, although the same concept applies. It's more difficult than it looks to create an animal that looks viable, but doesn't resemble an existing creature, and a big part of that is getting the musculature right. Here I went with powerful shoulders and chest muscles, and strong, wiry legs. The upper arms are vaguely humanoid, with the triceps and biceps muscles clearly visible.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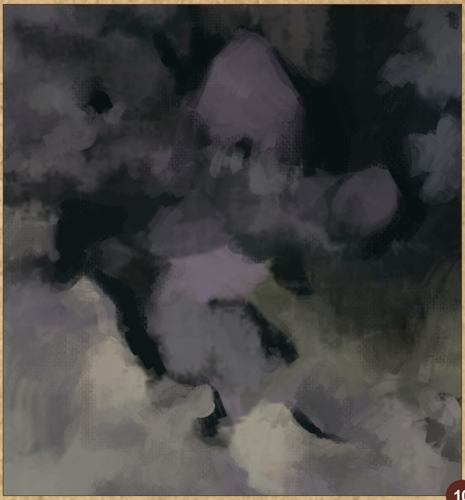
Where the shoulder attaches to the body, I painted some creases and fatty overhangs to give the impression that the arm is not just stuck on there. The broad chest muscles suggest a creature with powerful forelimbs and the ability to move quickly. I also added folds of flesh to the mid and lower back, to make it apparent that the creature is a little overweight, no doubt from consuming too many loggers.

For the feet, I went with hooves, emphasizing that this is a fast-moving beast. Because the hidebehind is squatting rather than standing, I painted his hind feet parallel to the ground, just like a sitting dog (**Fig.09**).

Painting the Ground

In low light we can see less detail than in strong light, such as sunlight. The key thing here is to avoid making the ground and the environment too fussy and instead to concentrate mainly on the contrast between dark shadow and the moonlit grass and rock. I used firm pressure in order to produce the sharp lines of the shadowed areas and lighter pressure for the tufts of grass, the stone and the earth textures (**Fig.10**).

Making Rocks Look Real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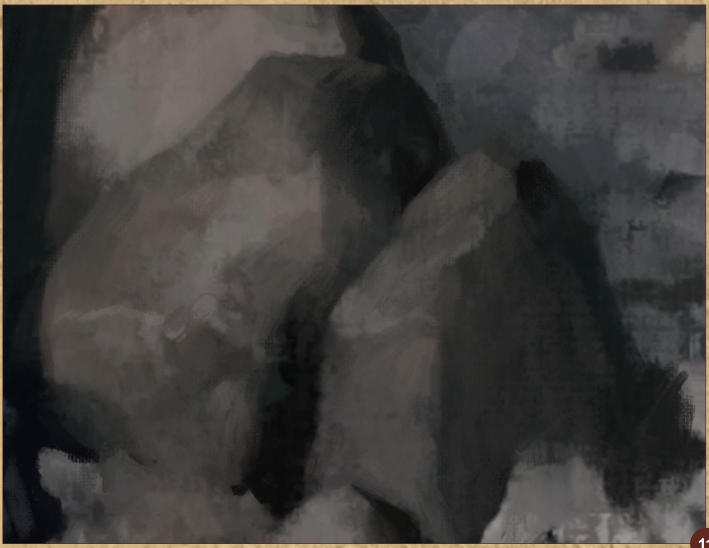
Because I had already done the groundwork for the rocks, they already had basic form and texture. The dim light means that I had less of a value range to play with than if it were daytime, so I was careful not to make my lighter colors too bright.

When painting the rock, I tried to imagine its three-dimensional form in my head and divide the rock into planes. The planes directly facing the light are generally the brightest, whereas those facing away at an angle are dimmer. If a plane is not impacted by the light at all, then, bearing in mind it's moonlight and the shadows are dark, I would paint it as almost black. I emphasized some of the edges that separate planes with faint highlights and this helped bring out the shape of the rock. As I painted, I



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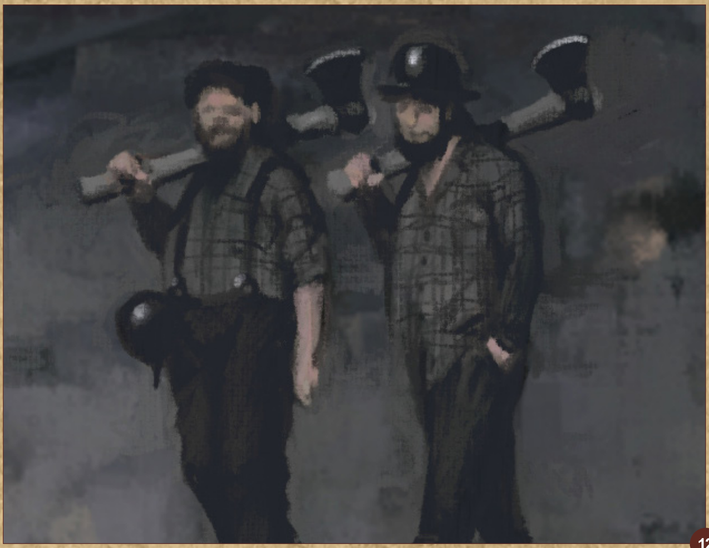

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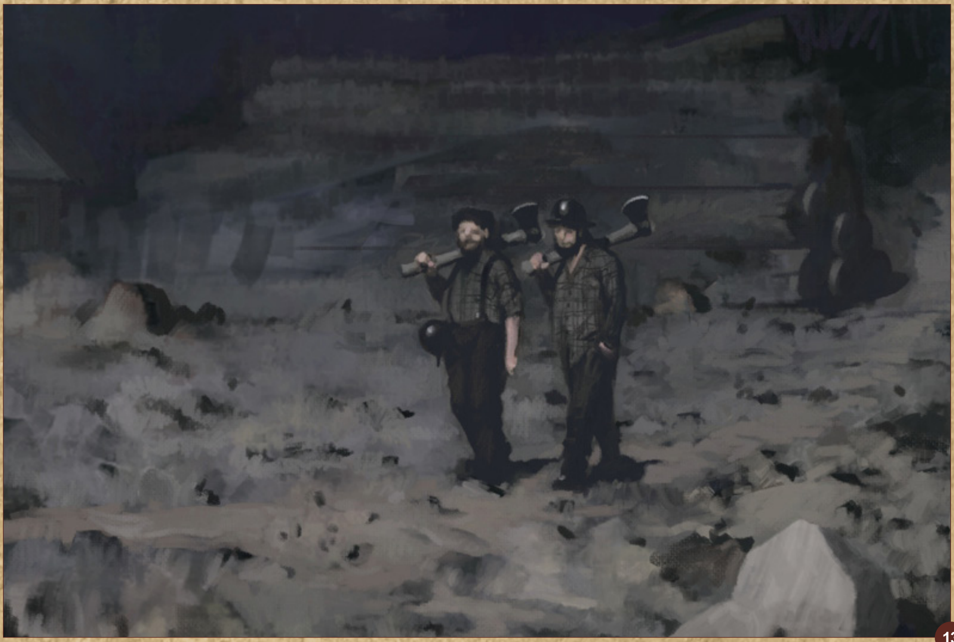
color-picked from the canvas and also from the Temporal Color Palette, which I had assigned to the \ key for easy access. To add the final touches, I used my circular brush with the Color Variability set. This gave a nice mottled effect, ideal for anything organic (**Fig.11**).

The Loggers

The two loggers comprised the secondary focus; the primary focus being the hidebehind himself. I painted them looking in the direction of the creature, but their relaxed gait and neutral expressions shows that they haven't actually seen him. Perhaps they saw a movement out of the corner of their eyes and, like the legends say, when they turned their gaze towards it, there was nothing there.

I then zoomed in to between 100-150% to add detail to this area. Because these two gentlemen were also the secondary focus of the piece, I used a slightly stronger color for their skin, so that they were not lost in the landscape (**Fig.12**).



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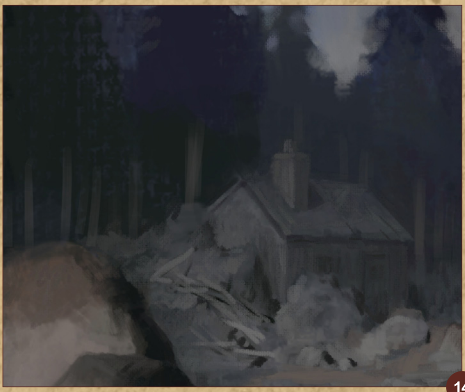

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The Path

To make sure the two loggers weren't just wandering aimlessly around, I included a path that meandered from the distant trees then moves off left (in the current orientation) across our field of view. I left the path ill-defined, as it would be if it were a well-travelled footpath, rather than a purpose-built affair. I painted it in a light, desaturated brown color so that it looked dusty (**Fig.13**).

Adding Interest

To add a little interest, I painted an old wooden hut in the middle distance and surrounded it with bushes and discarded planks of wood. I kept the paint values within a very narrow range so as not to draw too much attention and I kept the detail to a minimum for the same reason. I also included a pile of tree-trunks not far from the hut, to reinforce the idea that the loggers have been working in the area (**Fig.14**).

Rocky Outcrop

I turned a blob of paint in the middle-distance into a rocky outcrop. Again, there's no need to go overboard on definition and so instead, I let the brush textures suggest most of the detail, and only concentrated on the direction of the light source and the position of the shadows. I find that reducing the paper dimensions in the Paper panel can give a really good grainy effect, which helps to prevent the over-smooth result you can sometimes get with digital brushes (**Fig.15**).

Heavens Above

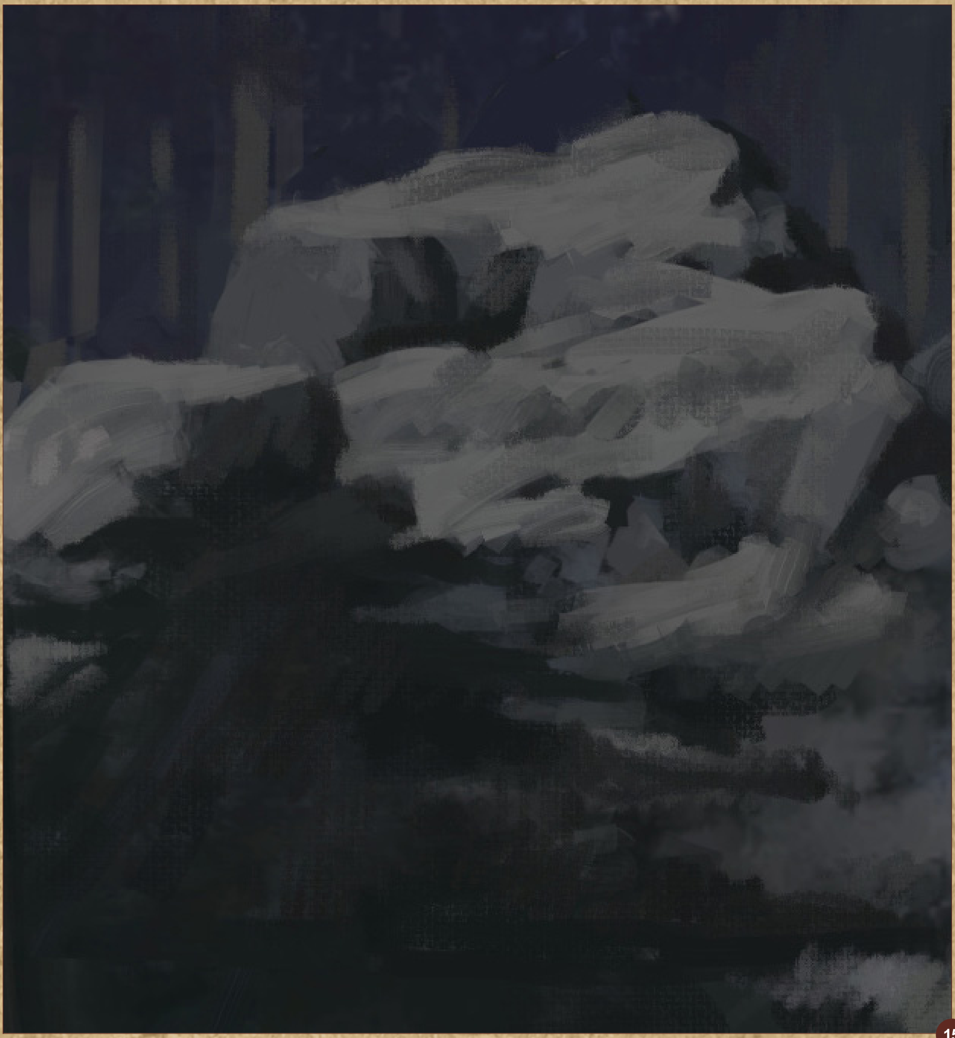
I dotted a few stars into the darker patches in the sky to represent the gaps between the distant clouds. I also varied the sizes of the stars just slightly, and over the larger ones, I applied a couple of dabs of a Glow brush set to a deep red color (**Fig.16**).

The Foreground Leaves

I had already roughed in the leaves on the foreground trees and so now it was time to refine them. I didn't want to paint every leaf and besides, it was too dark to distinguish such details, so I used a small circular brush to paint a jagged outline against the night sky. To achieve the sharp edges I color-picked the sky in that area and used that to paint the gaps between the leaves. Here and there, I left thin lines to represent branches and twigs (**Fig.17**).

Finishing Up

I went over the entire image and cleaned up any loose ends, and then left it for a short while before coming back to it and checking again. The first thing I noticed was that the two loggers were still slightly lost in the background. To remedy this, I used a quick method of highlighting using a new layer set to Overlay. I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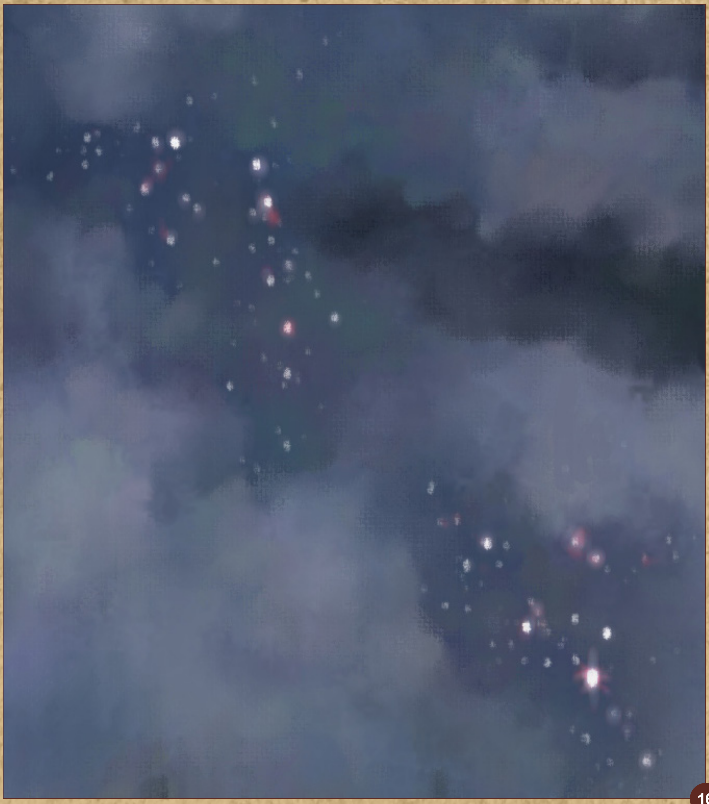
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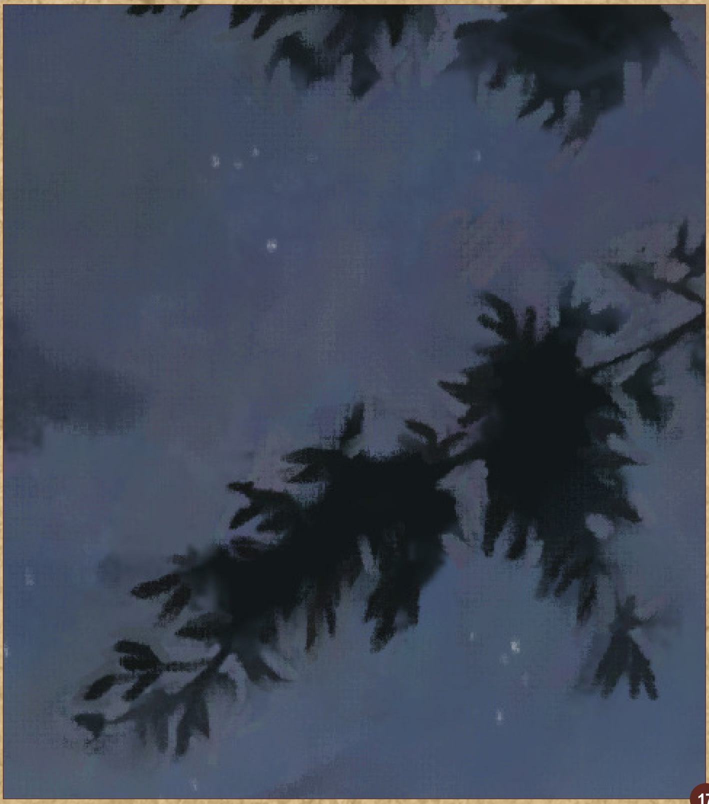
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set the layer to 40% and dabbed some bright white paint onto it, then dropped the layer onto the canvas. This had the effect of strengthening the light falling on the two gentlemen by increasing the brightness and saturation of their shirts and skin.

I decided to shorten the shadows throughout the image, effectively making the unseen moon higher in the sky. I also adjusted one of the tree shadows, so it was partially falling on one of the loggers, which I think helps to integrate the two characters with their environment.

When I was happy with the image, I increased the image contrast just a touch and saved it as a TIF (**Fig.18**).

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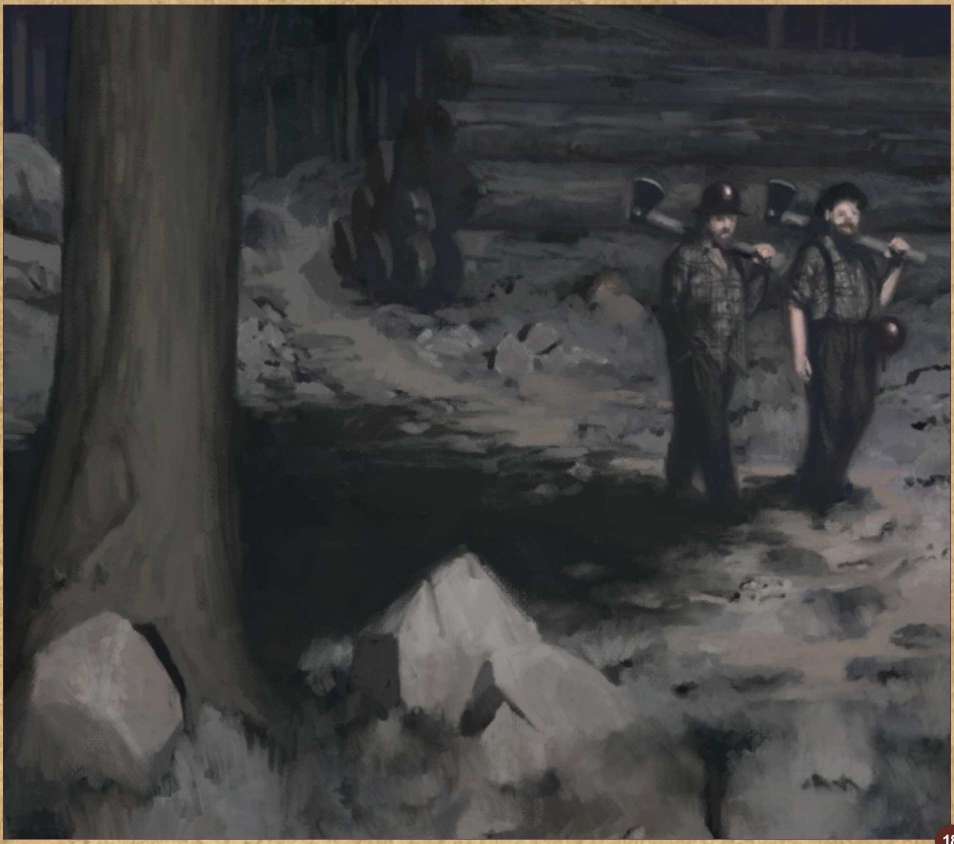

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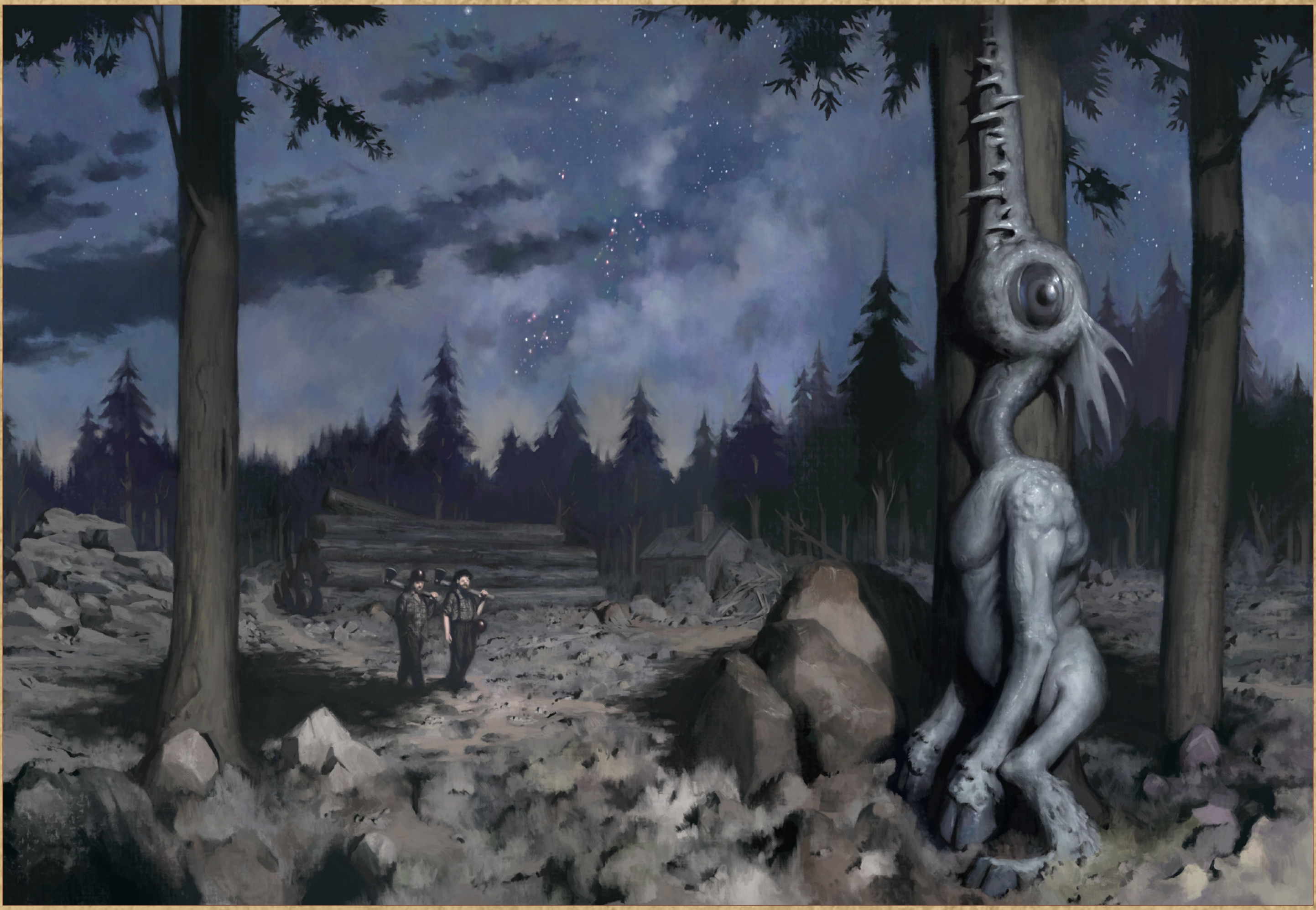

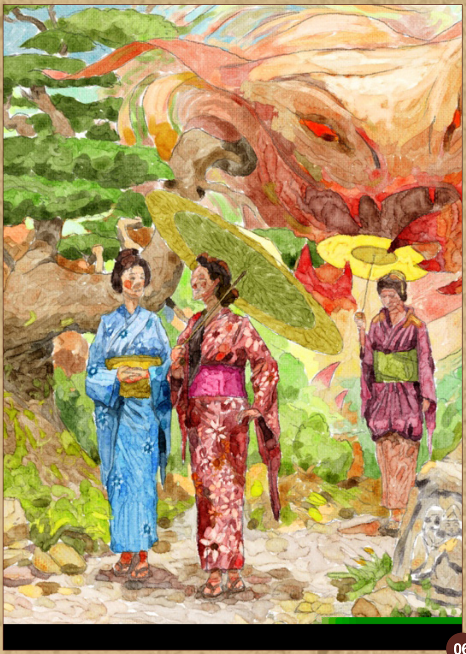
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07

Fill the Canvas

I work my way across the [illegible] not paying too much atten[illegible] concentrating instead on [illegible] of color. The focus of the p[illegible] positioning color tone [illegible] characters in the foregro[illegible] a little odd, given that the [illegible] the Ittan momen itself bu[illegible] is ghostly and furtive, I'm [illegible] secondary source of focus [illegible] luck, I can communicate its stealthy nature to the viewer (Fig.06).

Beginning the Detail

The next step is to drop [illegible] I've finished using waterco[illegible] longer need to preserve the [illegible] Before I drop the layers I [illegible] of Layer 1 – the sketch layer [illegible] doesn't appear too dark.

Next I resample the image to full working size. I choose a height of [illegible] pixels [illegible] will be sufficient enough to [illegible] level of detail. These dim[illegible] than the specification bu[illegible] simply resize down when I'm [illegible] image as a PSD as I no longer [illegible] the watercolor wetness [illegible] preference and in terms of [illegible] could continue equally well [illegible]

Using my circular brush I begin detailing the characters. I don't recognize any "right" [illegible] start, so my choice to begin with the [illegible] purely arbitrary. My circular brush allows [illegible] color to be put down with [illegible] an almost pure blending of [illegible] a light pressure. This means I don't [illegible] between painting [illegible] Painter's Brush [illegible] is a great help in configuring [illegible] for individual brushes.

In terms of color I'll mostly pick from the watercolor paint that's already on the canvas. Real Watercolors have the advantage that they [illegible] hue and saturation [illegible] a single color choice, so color [illegible] produces flexible [illegible] I often increase the saturation [illegible] using the Temporal Color palette directly after picking from [illegible] any potential mudding of [illegible]

Fig.07

08

09

Character Interaction

[illegible] the characters in your image [illegible]

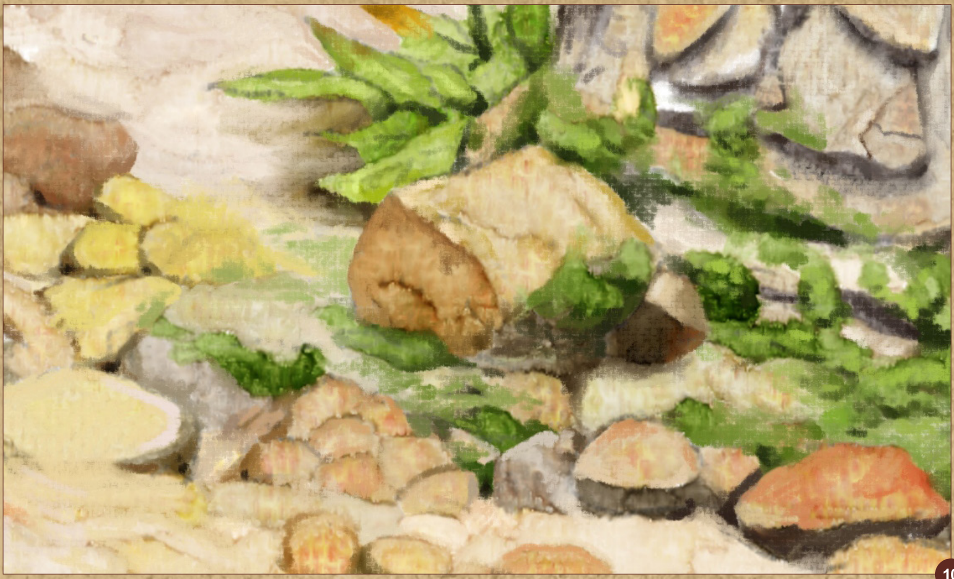
[illegible] each other's presence [illegible] detract from the painting's [illegible]

Fig.08

Adding Interest

[illegible]

Fig.09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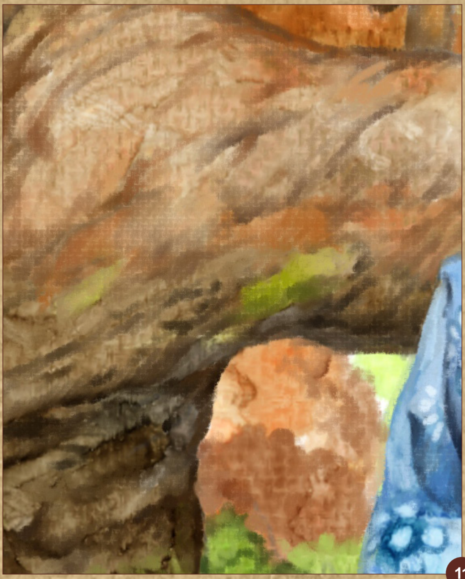
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Bringing Out the Textures

The Real Watercolor brush produces some excellent fringed textures [illegible]

I want to retain those textures in the final piece. This is particularly [illegible] the rocky ground and vegetation [illegible] refinement with the Circular [illegible] realistic organic shapes [illegible] rocks almost without trying. The [illegible] see patterns within the textures [illegible] them into recognizable sh[illegible] starting with an outline [illegible] col[illegible] Fig.10

Painting Tree Bark

I use the same basic principle [illegible] in the previous step to paint the tree bark [illegible] the main difference being that I paint a subtle spiral pattern in the bark [illegible] helps give the impression that the [illegible] dimensional. In the same wa[illegible] the tree might look in the [illegible]

Apply some shadows where the [illegible] branches curve towards an[illegible] view (Fig.11) [illegible]here possible.

Leaves and Foliage

[illegible] foliage in the [illegible] can whilst enhancing it with vague triangular leaf shapes of varying ton[illegible] this way I can communicate the impr[illegible] Fig.12 [illegible]

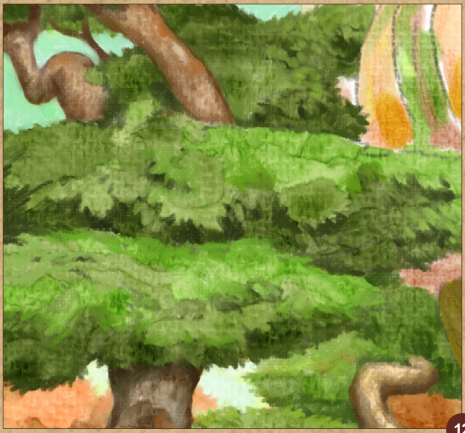
Ittan-momen

[illegible] to the process. The reason for this is

[illegible] to giving my [illegible] them as solid and bone. Ittan momen howev[illegible] sort of beast resembling a[illegible] or ribbon like material and [illegible] trail into [illegible] the hea[illegible] creature [illegible] texture as I [illegible]

Hinting at the Surreal

[illegible] momen's form atmosphere or emerging dir[illegible] air. I use mid range values fo[illegible] that they don't overpower t[illegible] Ittan momen's gaze [illegible] Fig.14 [illegible] to pay a fair amount [illegible]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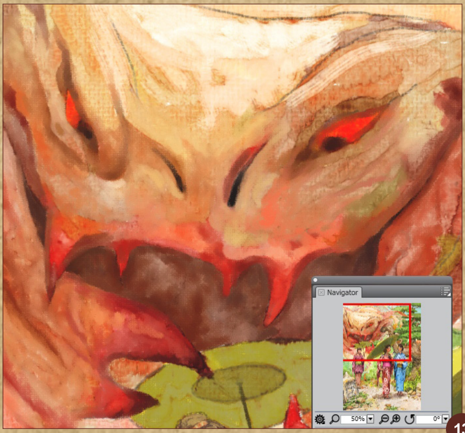

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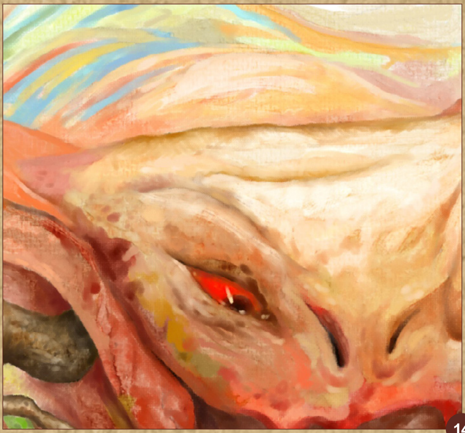
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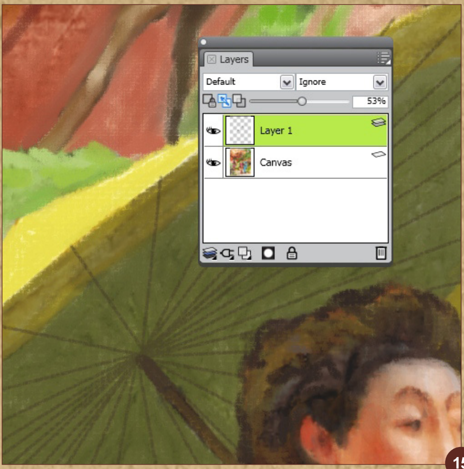

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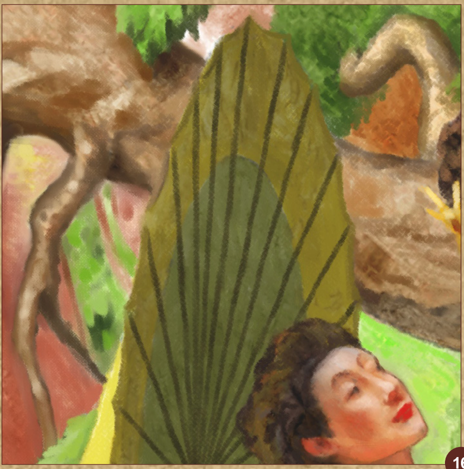
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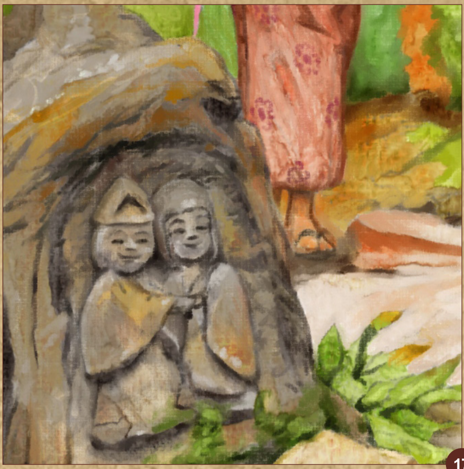
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Making Use of Layers

7KH SDUDVROV QHHG VRPH UHJ [illegible] **Fig.16** VSDFHG VSRNHV FRPLQJ RXW IURP WKH FHQWHU 7KH HDVLHVW ZD\ WR GR WKLV LV ZLWK D OD\HU [illegible] D QHZ OD\HU DQG SUHVV 9 WR VHW P\ [illegible] , PDQXDOO\ GUDZ HDFK VSRNH [illegible] WKH HGJH SUHVVLQJ 9 EHWZHHQ [illegible] WKH FXUVRU SRVLWLRQ , WKH [illegible] WR DQG HUDVH WKH SRUWLRQ [illegible] ZRPDQ¶V KHDG , GURS WKH OD [illegible] DQG SUHVV % WR UHWXUQ WKH [illegible] SDLQWLQJ PRGH EHIRUH ZRUNLQJ [illegible] EOHQG WKHP D OLWWOH PRUH [illegible] SDUD **Fig.15**

Rotating the Canvas

2Q RFFDVLRQ ,¶OO XVH WKH 5 [illegible] WR PRGLI\ WKH FDQYDV RULHQ [illegible] DYRLGLQJ KDYLQJ WR DQJOH P [illegible] XQFRPIRUWDEOH GUDZLQJ SRVL [illegible] DOVR EH DFKLHYHG E\ XVLQJ 6 [illegible] 2SWLRQ IRU 0$& ,I \RX¶UH [illegible] SUHVV WKH 6SDFHEDU ¿UVW [illegible] GRHVQ¶W ZRUN <RX FDQ DOVR [illegible]

SDQHO WR FRQWURO URWDWLRQ [illegible]

Tweaking Values

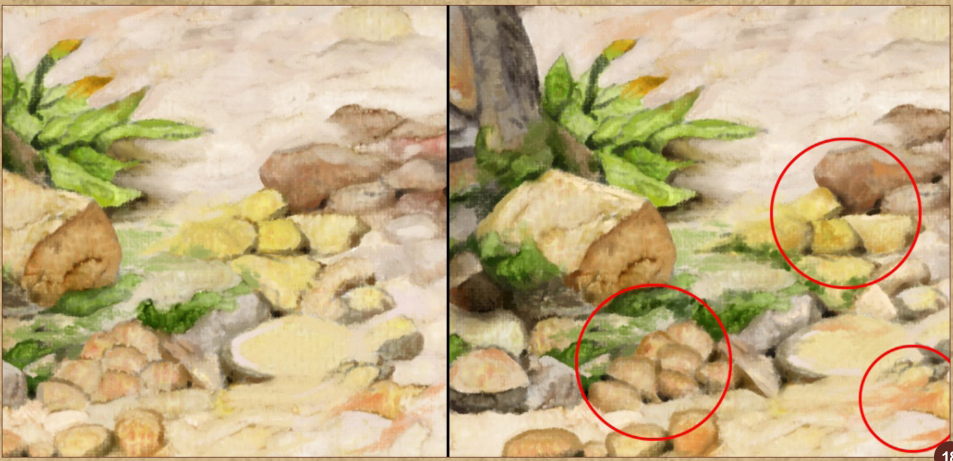
[illegible] WRQH FDUYLQJ DSSHDUV WRR EULJKW [illegible] EDODQFH WKH FRPSRVLWLRQ [illegible] $V D [illegible] WKH LPDJH [illegible] , PHGLDWHO\ , [illegible] WKH [illegible] ZKLFK [illegible] JLYLQJ [illegible] JUDQLWH QRWLFH WKDW WKH IRUNHG SDWK [illegible] FKLSSHG DQG **Fig.17** JUDQLWH

Tidying Up

[illegible] WR UH¿QH DQ\ WH[WXUHV , PLVV [illegible] IULQJHG EOREV RI ZDWHUFRORU [illegible] URXQGHG SHEEOHV RU **Fig.18** WFKHV [illegible] FOHDU ZKHUH LW UHFHGHV LQWR [illegible] , VSHQG D OLWWOH WLPH GH¿QL [illegible] **Fig.19** HQ YHJ [illegible] WR DGG GH¿QLWLRQ

Pushing the Shadows

[illegible] VWDJH [illegible] LQ RUGHU WR [illegible] [illegible] VH WKH [illegible] WR IXOO\ EU [illegible] WKLV [illegible] D F [illegible] DQG FR [illegible] D VSHFL¿ [illegible] WKLV Z [illegible] XVHIXO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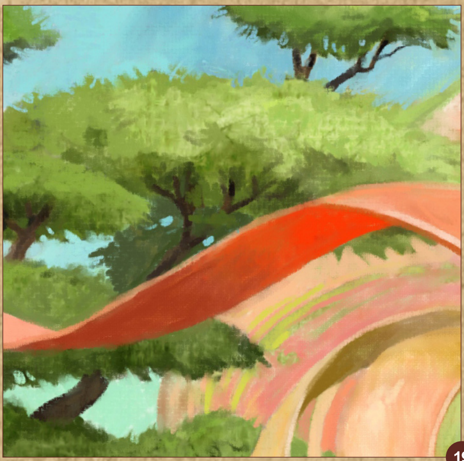
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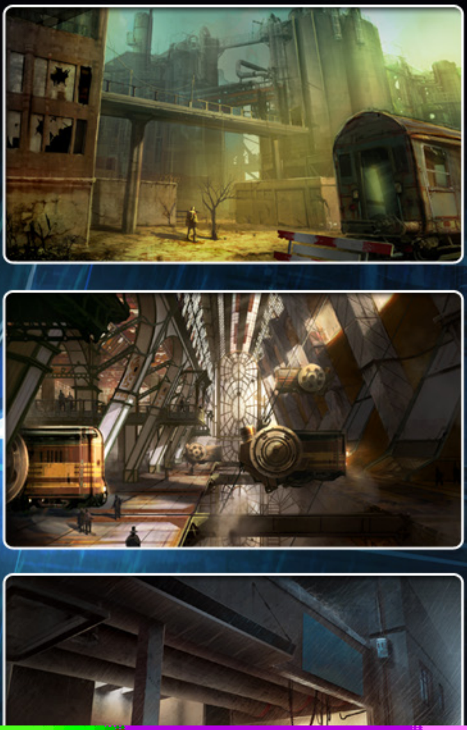

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